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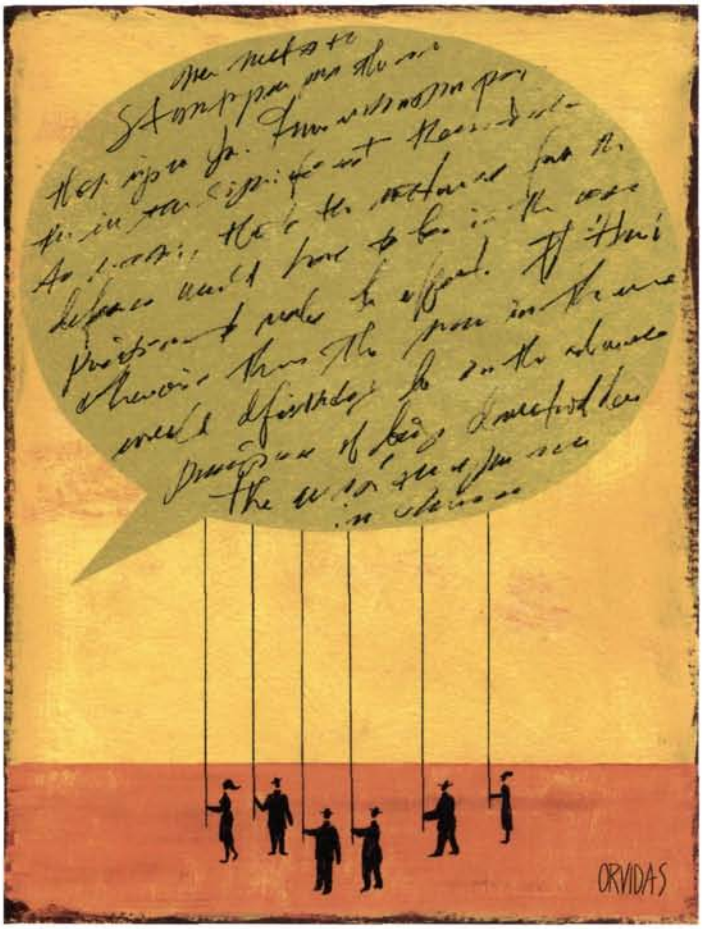

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Debating Universal Preschool, Cash for Test Scores, Better Pay for Young Teachers, A Charter That Recruits Troubled Kids, The Value of Paternalism

CONTRIBUTORS: JAMES FORMAN JR., JACOB VIGDOR, DAVID WHITMAN, WILLIAM HOWELL, KIRABO JACKSON, PETER MEYER, CRAIG RAMEY, DOUGLAS BESHAROV, W. STEPHEN WILSON

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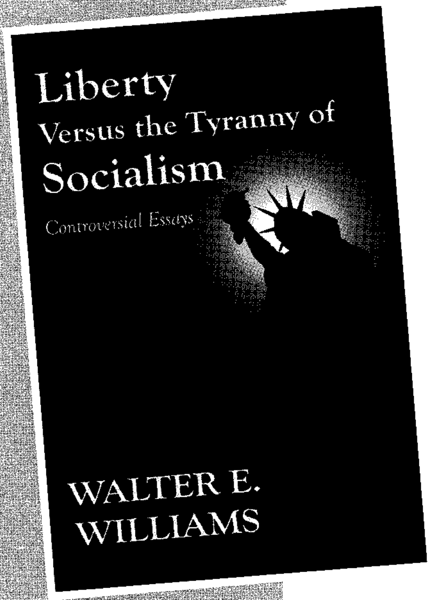

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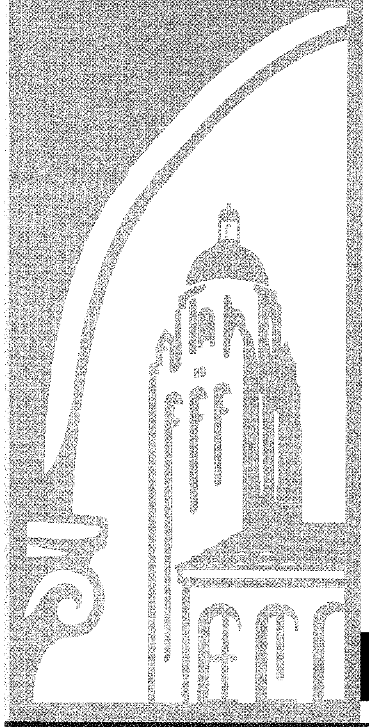

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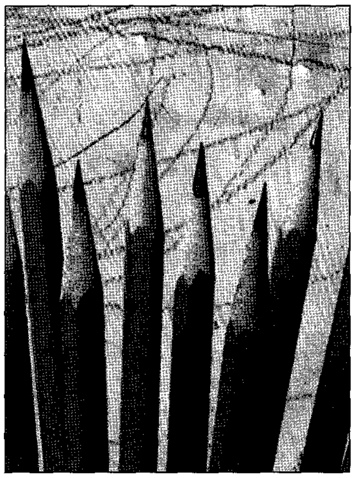
44

60



70

features

12 The 2008 *Education Next*–PEPG Survey of Public Opinion
Americans think less of their schools than of their police departments and post offices
by WILLIAM G. HOWELL, MARTIN R. WEST, and PAUL E. PETERSON

28 The Early Education of Our Next President
Not much in public schools
by PETER MEYER

36 Scrap the Sacrosanct Salary Schedule
How about more pay for new teachers, less for older ones?
by JACOB VIGDOR

44 Out of Jail and Into Jobs
Maya Angelou Public Charter School offers hope and an education to kids in trouble
by JAMES FORMAN JR.

52 An Appeal to Authority
The new paternalism in urban schools
by DAVID WHITMAN

forum

60 Preschool Puzzle
As state after state expands pre-K schooling, questions remain
Education Next talks to
DOUGLAS BESHAROV and CRAIG RAMEY

research

70 Cash for Test Scores
The impact of the Texas Advanced Placement Incentive Program
by C. KIRABO JACKSON

from the editors

5 The Next President Had Many School Choices
by PAUL E. PETERSON

correspondence

6 *Disrupting class; Governor Schwarzenegger; Reading First; New York City charters; wrong numbers; charter sector*

the legal beat

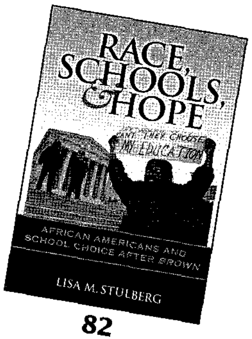
11 Home Schoolers Strike Back
by JOSHUA DUNN and MARTHA DERTHICK

book review

78 Disrupting Class: Why Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns
by CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN, with MICHAEL B. HORN and CURTIS W. JOHNSON
REVIEWED by NATHAN GLAZER

80 See Government Grow: Education Politics from Johnson to Reagan
by GARETH DAVIES
REVIEWED by LUTHER SPOEHR

82 Book Alert



82

what next

85 Arrested Development
by MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

school life

88 What Do College Students Know?
by W. STEPHEN WILSON

COVER ILLUSTRATION / *Ken Orvidas*

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 4

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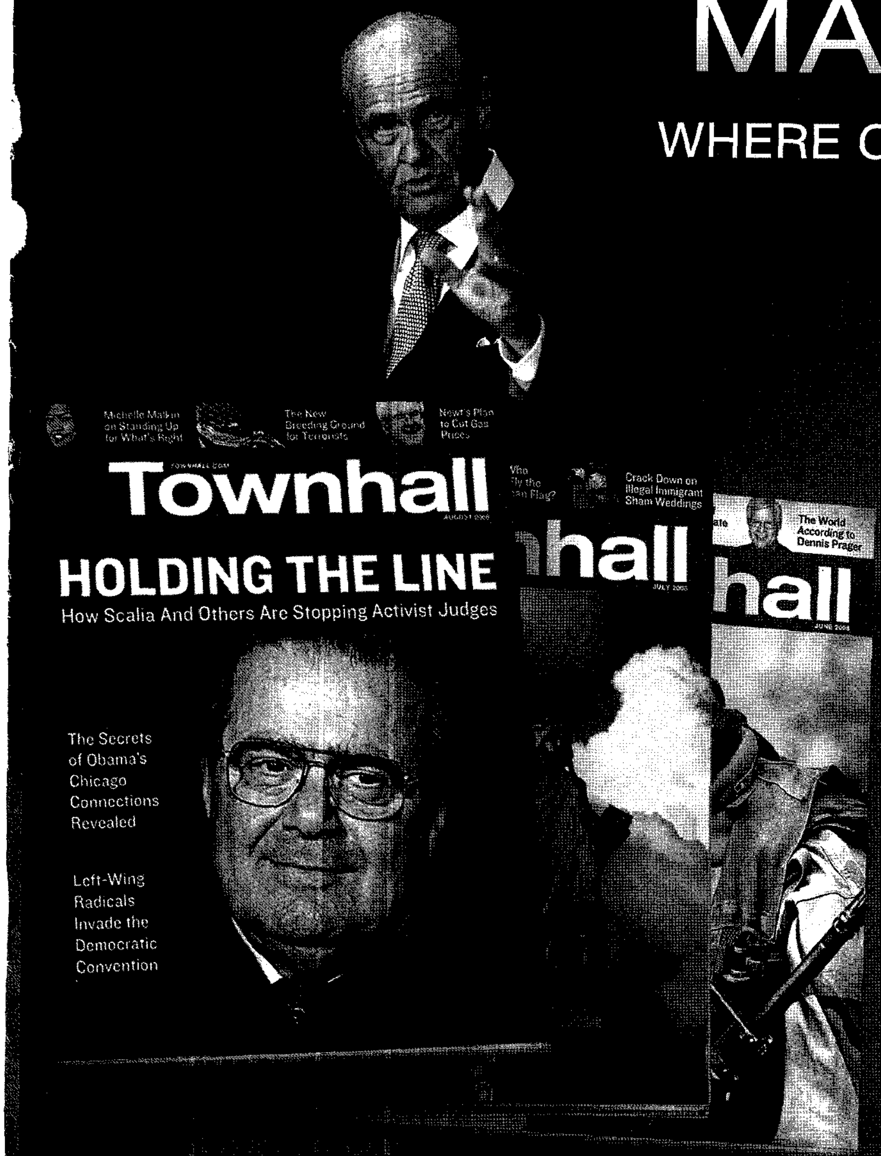
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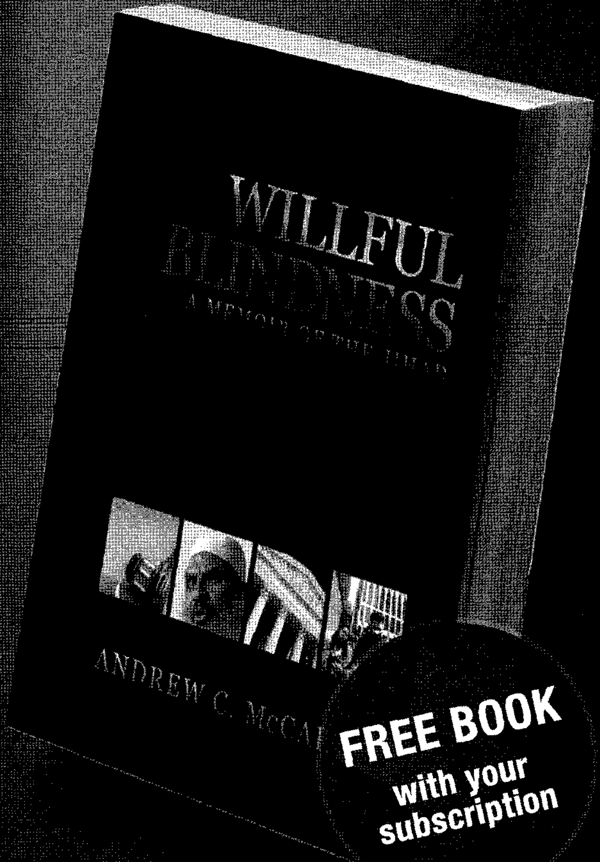
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The Next President Had Many School Choices

Will he provide similar opportunities for others?

Both candidates had mothers who taught their sons a great deal and made careful choices—when they could—in selecting their sons' schools.

Not since Abraham Lincoln have we had a president with as unusual an early education as the one experienced by the man who will take office on January 20, 2009. John McCain and Barack Obama each had considerably more formal schooling than "Honest Abe," who spent only a few months in a one-room schoolhouse in his childhood. But the oddities of their educational experiences exceed even those of Teddy Roosevelt, the only other contender for this honor. (Though home schoolers may claim TR as their own, he was actually tutored by paid professionals.)

McCain apparently attended some 20 schools, including military base schools, public schools, and the elite Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia. He was bounced among so many schools as a child that McCain claims to have been educated mainly in his "mother's mobile classroom." Obama attended Indonesian Catholic and public schools, took correspondence courses under his mother's watch, and graduated from an elite Hawaiian independent school. His early schooling was so problematic that his mother enrolled Obama in the correspondence course so that he could learn English (see "The Early Education of Our Next President," page 28).

Both candidates had mothers who taught their sons a great deal and made careful choices—when they could—in selecting their sons' schools. In the end, both young men went to top-notch colleges and pursued advanced degrees; needless to say, both have accomplished much. One can hardly make a better case for school choice.

Obama and McCain have hinted at the possibility that they are willing to embrace school choice for the sons and daughters of other Americans. "A truly historic commitment to education," Obama says, "will require a willingness to break free from the same debates that Washington has been engaged in for decades—Democrat versus Republican; vouchers versus the status quo; more money versus more accountability." During the heat of the primary campaign, Obama proclaimed, "We need to support charter schools. I think it is important to experiment, by looking at how we can reward excellence in the classroom." Although he voted against legislation that would permit a voucher experiment in Washington, D.C., he has since said, in perhaps an unguarded moment, "If there was any argument for vouchers, it was 'Alright, let's see if this experiment works,' and if it does, then whatever my preconceptions, my attitude is you do what works for the kids."

McCain goes much further, saying, "Choice and competition is the key to success in education in America. That means charter schools, that means home schooling, it means vouchers." On another occasion, he urged, "We should try charter schools all over America."

If the next president decides to provide the range of choices for other Americans that he himself enjoyed many years ago, he would not have to win over a hostile public. According to the latest *Education Next*–PEPG poll, more Americans support than oppose charter schools, tax credits for education expenses, and Internet-delivered courses for advanced (and rural) students (see "The 2008 *Education Next*–PEPG Survey of Public Opinion," page 12).

But the president would have some educating to do. Much of the public still knows little about charter schools, which today serve only 2 percent of the population. Online schooling is in its infancy, and Americans remain skeptical of its use for credit by either dropouts or home-schooled students.

Still, the public recognizes that the existing school system is mediocre or worse. Two-thirds give the nation's schools a grade of no better than "C," and more Americans think highly of their local police department than of their neighborhood school.

Nor are many people content with current federal efforts to fix the situation. Public support for No Child Left Behind eroded noticeably between 2007 and 2008.

Both Obama and McCain promise to reform that law. If they use the occasion to encourage creative new ways to give more Americans decent choices among schools—perhaps through charters, perhaps over the Internet, perhaps through vouchers or via the tax code—they could put their own heterodox education to good civic use.

— **Paul E. Peterson**

MISSION STATEMENT In the stormy seas of school reform, this journal will steer a steady course, presenting the facts as best they can be determined, giving voice (without fear or favor) to worthy research, sound ideas, and responsible arguments. Bold change is needed in American K–12 education, but *Education Next* partakes of no program, campaign, or ideology. It goes where the evidence points.

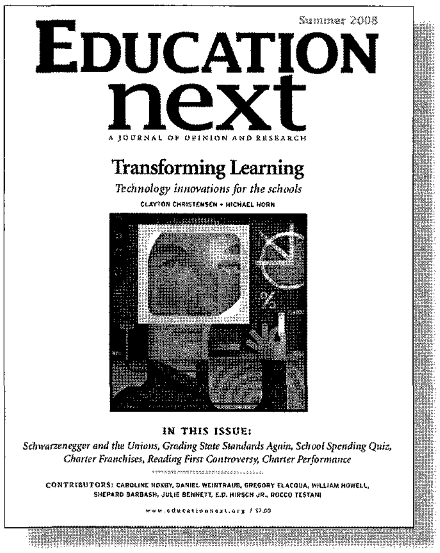
Disrupting Class

Clay Christensen and Michael Horn's essay ("How Do We Transform Our Schools?" *features*, Summer 2008) has a plaintive quality to it. Their argument about disruptive innovation is compelling in a for-profit setting, not so in elementary and secondary schools, which are positively hostile to innovation, nondisruptive as well as disruptive. It makes no difference whether the schools in question are public or private, not-for-profit or for-profit. They all look and act the same. Why? The culture: in the things that matter—organization, administration, curriculum, teaching, and learning—they are all cut from the same cloth.

Consider entrepreneurial behavior for a moment. It requires incentives (to think as an entrepreneur) and rewards (to behave as an entrepreneur). Neither exists in elementary and secondary schooling. To the contrary, schools are positively hostile to entrepreneurship, the key condition for successful innovation of any kind. What is more likely than a disruptive technology *in* the schools is a disruptive technology that end-runs the schools: indeed, all the things that kids like about technology—games, Facebook, texting, PDAs, cell phones, smaller and smaller computers, 24/7 uncensored web access—are off-limits in schools.

The authors' conjecture about the "commercial system" in the U.S. beginning with the "writing of concepts in textbooks" reveals more than they perhaps intended. Made possible by Gutenberg and invented by Jan Comenius (*The Great Didactic*), the textbook was the technology that made mass education possible (and has come to symbolize the anti-intellectualism that is the hallmark of American schools). Wikis, collaborative web sites for storing and sharing data, may be the ultimate disruptive technology, spelling both the emblematic and literal end of the textbook, an event to be devoutly welcomed and applauded.

Denis P. Doyle
Co-founder and
Chief Academic Officer
SchoolNet, Inc.



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Transforming Learning

Technology innovations for the schools

CLAYTON CHRISTENSEN • MICHAEL HORN

IN THIS ISSUE:

Schwarzenegger and the Unions, Grading State Standards Again, School Spending Quiz, Charter Franchises, Reading First Controversy, Charter Performance

CONTRIBUTORS: CAROLINE HOXBY, DANIEL WEINTRAUB, GREGORY ELACQUA, WILLIAM HOWELL, SHEPARD BARBASH, JULIE BENNETT, E.D. HIRSCH JR., ROCCO TESTANI

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The Governator

Daniel Weintraub's chronicle of the tortured path of education politics under Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger ("No Country for Strong Men," *features*, Summer 2008) hints at the frustration surrounding the death of the Year of Education Reform in California, but it fails to reach the obvious conclusion: if the "Governator" cannot do it, nobody is likely to do it—now or in the future.

The backdrop of current California education politics is a $2 million set of studies that convincingly argue that the system is the problem. The studies conclude that virtually any amount of added funding is likely to be swallowed up without a trace of improvement in student achievement and without significant changes in the rules, regulations, and incentives. Based on those studies, the governor's own commission, of which I am a member, called for an array of interlocking changes that would break school districts free to deal with California students mired at the bottom of state rankings on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Governor Schwarzenegger, because of his immense personal power and because he became governor without the usual strings attached to California politicians going through the primary process, stands in a unique position to move the schools forward. But it appears that even he finds the task of securing the future for California children to be too difficult. If that doesn't change, California will fuel its economy with imported workers from other states and countries, because California schools simply are not preparing students for a dynamic, skills-based labor market.

Stories of education politics always have their punch lines centered on which of the named combatants wins. The stories are grounded in the battles over propositions, budgets, and the like. And, they find it easy to ignore the real losers—the students.

Eric Hanushek
Senior Fellow
Hoover Institution
Stanford University

Daniel Weintraub's article is an excellent overview of Schwarzenegger's limited vision and impact on K–12 education. Just when the governor appeared ready to think hard about new concepts, an $18 billion budget deficit appeared. When there was money, in 2006, the governor and legislature created more than 20 small-widget categorical programs rather than addressing fundamental problems. They spent all the new money rather than saving it for years when state economic growth slows.

But my conclusion from his speeches and discussions is that the governor hopes his proposals for larger system change will trickle down to education. He is relying on voter initiatives for legislative redistricting and saving money from good revenue years. Redistricting may produce more legislators who are moderates and not as beholden to interest groups. Health care, however, is his top priority, so even these initiatives may never touch education.

The education coalition will not permit real policy change without a lot of new money. The coalition is more than teachers unions and includes school boards, administrators, PTAs, and noncertified employees represented by several different unions, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Governor Schwarzenegger has no coalition that can overcome this alliance, with its proven pressure tactics that include student demonstrations. So the best strategy is to wait for economic conditions to improve and try to put together a deal that has more money and real reform. This approach has not been implemented since 1983, and this governor is term-limited in 2010.

The governor is relying on voter initiatives for legislative redistricting and saving money from good revenue years.

Michael W. Kirst
Professor Emeritus
Stanford University

feature

The
Reading First
CONTROVERSY

Promises and perils of federal leadership

BY SHEPARD BARBASH

"Reading First is the most effective federal program in history." So reads the opening line of a report that Alabama superintendent of education Joseph Morton sent to his congressional delegation last June, in which he recounts how the program has raised reading achievement for poor students in his charge. Morton's view is shared by leaders in many other states, where thousands of Reading First elementary schools have reported unprecedented progress closing the "literacy gap" among the poor.

And yet a string of ironies plagues Reading First, threatening its future at the height of its promise. The program is the only component of No Child Left Behind to be rated "effective" by the White House Office of Management and Budget, yet the administration has done little to protect it. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings calls it "the most effective and successful reading initiative in the nation's history," yet she removed its two leaders from their jobs. It is the one part of the No Child Left Behind law educators say they like, yet it has been targeted for deep cuts in funding (see Figure 1). Its prescriptive approach would seem easy fodder for Republicans to attack, yet Democrats in Congress have led the assault against it.

Reading First

Shep Barbash has done a masterful job of explaining the goals of the Reading First program and its journey through periods of legislative gymnastics, controversy, and success in selected states ("Looking Beyond the Reading First Controversy," *features*, Summer 2008). Barbash has underscored the unique nontraditional features of the program and how those features made both acceptance of the program and its implementation difficult. His analysis is timely given the recent Reading First Impact Study, which will no doubt provide fuel for gutting the program.

The need to design and implement a rigorous impact study was essential to the improvement of the evidence-based Reading First program. That is why Bob Sweet and I included evaluation targets in the law and substantial funds ($25 million) to address the targets. However, for this interim report, few evaluation tasks were completed, including the determination of which instructional materials improve reading proficiency. Unless the final report addresses this issue, it will not be possible to identify which programs and materials were most beneficial for which children and under what conditions.

The Department of Education was provided the resources to reduce misinterpretation of the study's findings, positive or negative. Yet it delayed the evaluation by using a research design that was not originally intended, potentially limiting an analysis of factors essential to valid interpretation. Evaluations are about accountability and improvement. Improvement is difficult if you have to guess what the data mean.

Barbash's review of Reading First programs in four states and in the Bureau of Indian Education is important because it highlights critical factors essential to reading improvement: strong leadership, effective professional development for teachers *and principals*, data-driven differentiated instruction, specific coaching and guidance to ensure implementation fidelity, and continuous program evaluation. Barbash has vividly described why change in education is so hard, but has given us examples of states and systems achieving the almost impossible on behalf of struggling readers. That is a real contribution.

G. Reid Lyon
Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy
Southern Methodist University

Wrong Numbers

William Howell and Martin West have written an interesting article about Americans' utter ignorance concerning the amounts their tax dollars contribute to public education costs ("Is the Price Right?" *features*, Summer 2008). While homeowners and parents were somewhat more knowledgeable than others, they too were way off in their estimates of per-pupil expenditures in their districts and average teacher salaries in their states. Yet the vast majority of Americans support increased spending on schools and believe that more money will result in more student learning.

It is humbling for us policy wonks to see how far off the public is about not only their investments in public schooling, but what might make a difference in student outcomes. But frankly, I'm more concerned about the taxpayers' and the pollsters' lack of interest in the unfairness of how the nation's only universal service is funded. Every level of government—local, state, and federal—underfunds the least well-off communities, with few exceptions, when considering varying student needs generated by poverty, disability, and language. Clearly, major efforts to educate the public are going to be necessary if school financing is ever to become fairer as well as wiser. We have learned that how money is spent is just as important as the amount. And given the lack of knowledge about funding, I shudder to think what a survey would show about what the money buys.

But are Americans any more informed about how their taxes and tax breaks work in other sectors, with the likely exception of the war in Iraq? Homeowners deduct mortgages and lower-income renters get virtually no help. We provide much more support to the elderly than we do to young children. Even the pinch of high health-care costs has not yet generated a successful public demand for more government investment. My hunch is that the public's knowledge of school funding is no less than their knowledge of other important funding issues.

CYNTHIA G. BROWN
Director of Education Policy
Center for American Progress

A Matter of Time

We read with great interest the article by Caroline Hoxby and Sonali Murarka, which reports promising results from their randomized-control

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study of New York City charter school students ("New York City Charter Schools," *research*, Summer 2008). One aspect of their research in particular caught our eye: the association of more school time with improved learning outcomes. Their finding that a longer year (and in many schools, a longer day, too) correlates to higher student proficiency rates is yet another indication that the traditional school calendar in the U.S. is not sufficient if we are going to meet our goal of moving all students to, at minimum, academic proficiency.

At least one-third of charter schools across the country operate with an expanded schedule. In Illinois and New Jersey, 80 percent of charter schools have a longer school day or year or both. At the newly formed National Center on Time & Learning, we are firm believers that more time can improve student learning because, like Hoxby and Murarka, we have seen it work. In Massachusetts, 18 urban district schools have added at least 300 hours to their school calendar. An analysis after one year of the initiative (involving 10 schools) showed that students in these schools outpaced average proficiency gains in the state in math, science, and English language arts. Our research suggests that an expanded school schedule offers a multitude of educational benefits, including more time on task, a broader array of enrichment programs to engage students in school, and time for teachers to participate in real collaborative planning and additional professional development.

This year we mark the 25th anniversary of *A Nation at Risk*. That report outlined four key recommendations concerning educational content, expectations, teachers, and time, noting that progress on each of these fronts would require leadership and fiscal support. We can point to important federal and state progress on all the recommendations, except for time. Only Massachusetts has a statewide initiative to assist traditional public schools in expanding school schedules. Now that Hoxby and Murarka's charter school data and the Massachusetts initiative show such promising results, we are hopeful that "time" will finally take its rightful place in our country's education reform lineup.

JENNIFER DAVIS
President
DAVID FARBMAN
Co-Director of Research
National Center on
Time & Learning

Charters as a Diverse Sector

Charter schools are too often treated as a monolithic reform and too rarely treated as a diverse sector. When we think of charter schools as a reform, we tend to either praise or criticize, depending on the particular snapshot of charter schools we're discussing. When we think of them as a sector, we understand that charter schools mirror other sectors—private schools and traditional publics—in their range of quality and outcomes. And we can learn from their successes and failures.

Viewed from this sector perspective, your two charter school articles ("Brand-Name Charters," *features*, and "New York City Charter Schools," *research*, Summer 2008) offer valuable contributions. From a reform perspective? Not so much.

The article about franchise charter schools describes a vibrant subsector. It explores the problem of growing beyond a small number of successful schools while simultaneously addressing quality control. Where the article runs into trouble is when it tells readers, with no empirical backing, that the charter movement began "with tremendous potential for narrowing the achievement gap," suggesting that there are "too few" charter schools to fulfill that promise. In truth, research has shown charter performance to be similar, on average, to the performance of traditional public schools.

The second article offers a more direct comparison of charters to other public schools, using a random lottery design. The results add one more data point to the diverse assortment of studies about charter performance: an example of the charter sector outperforming, on the whole, nearby traditional schools. The comparison here, it should be noted, is to New York City schools that have been criticized as underfunded and underperforming. The study thus tells us either that the charters did well, the other schools did poorly, or a combination of both.

The authors are careful to state that the significance of the findings is limited to large cities with similar student populations, to which I would add a caution about the generalizability beyond New York City itself. As with the first article, the second is strongest when it approaches charters as a diverse sector, teasing out the sorts of school practices associated with higher test scores. Let's keep trying to learn about what works.

KEVIN G. WELNER
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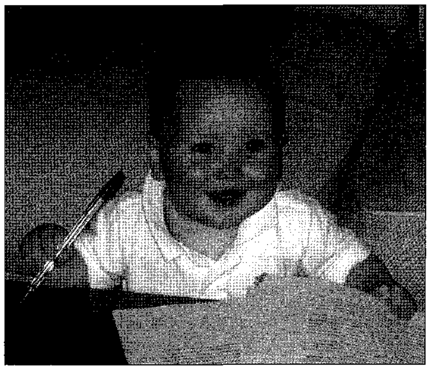

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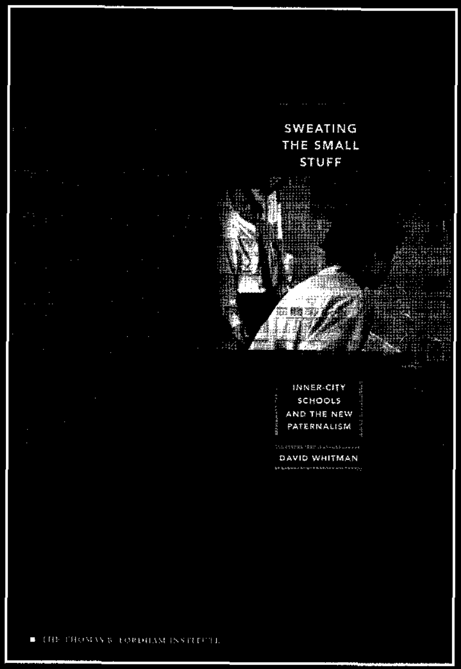
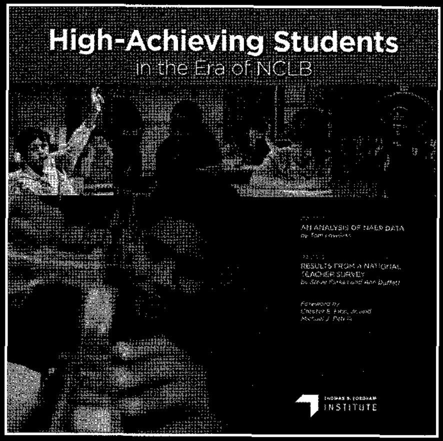


SWEATING THE SMALL STUFF
INNER-CITY SCHOOLS AND THE NEW PATERNALISM
DAVID WHITMAN
THE THOMAS B. FORDHAM INSTITUTE



High-Achieving Students
in the Era of NCLB
AN ANALYSIS OF NAEP DATA
by Tom Loveless
RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL TEACHER SURVEY
by Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett
Foreword by
Chester E. Finn, Jr. and
Michael J. Petrilli
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Home Schoolers Strike Back

California case centers on parents' rights

BY JOSHUA DUNN AND MARTHA DERTHICK

To their surprise, California's home-schooling parents found out in February that they were scofflaws. A state appellate court ruled in *In re Rachel L.* that state law requires all children to be taught by certified teachers. Thus, nearly 200,000 children were being taught illegally, leading home schoolers to predict the imminent arrival of police investigating accusations of truancy.

Home schooling appears to have become too well organized and politically effective to be undone by a judicial opinion.

Few were aware that the legality of home schooling was even under judicial consideration. Home schooling was initially an ancillary consideration in a child welfare case involving Phillip and Mary Long, parents of eight home-schooled children. An investigation into claims of mistreatment by one of their daughters revealed that they were providing at best a poor education. A juvenile court judge ruled nonetheless that the Longs had a constitutional right to home school. At the request of a court-appointed attorney for two of the children, the appellate court both overturned the juvenile court and took the broader step of ruling that home-schooling parents must have state teaching certification, leaving the vast majority in violation of the law. To no one's surprise, the state's teachers unions praised the decision.

Prior to the ruling, the California Department of Education had interpreted the state's education code to allow four ways for children to be taught at home: 1) qualify as a private school, 2) use a certified tutor, 3) officially enroll in a private school satellite program, or 4) enroll in a public school's independent study program. The Longs had been home schooling under option 3, having enrolled their children in the Sunland Christian School's satellite program.

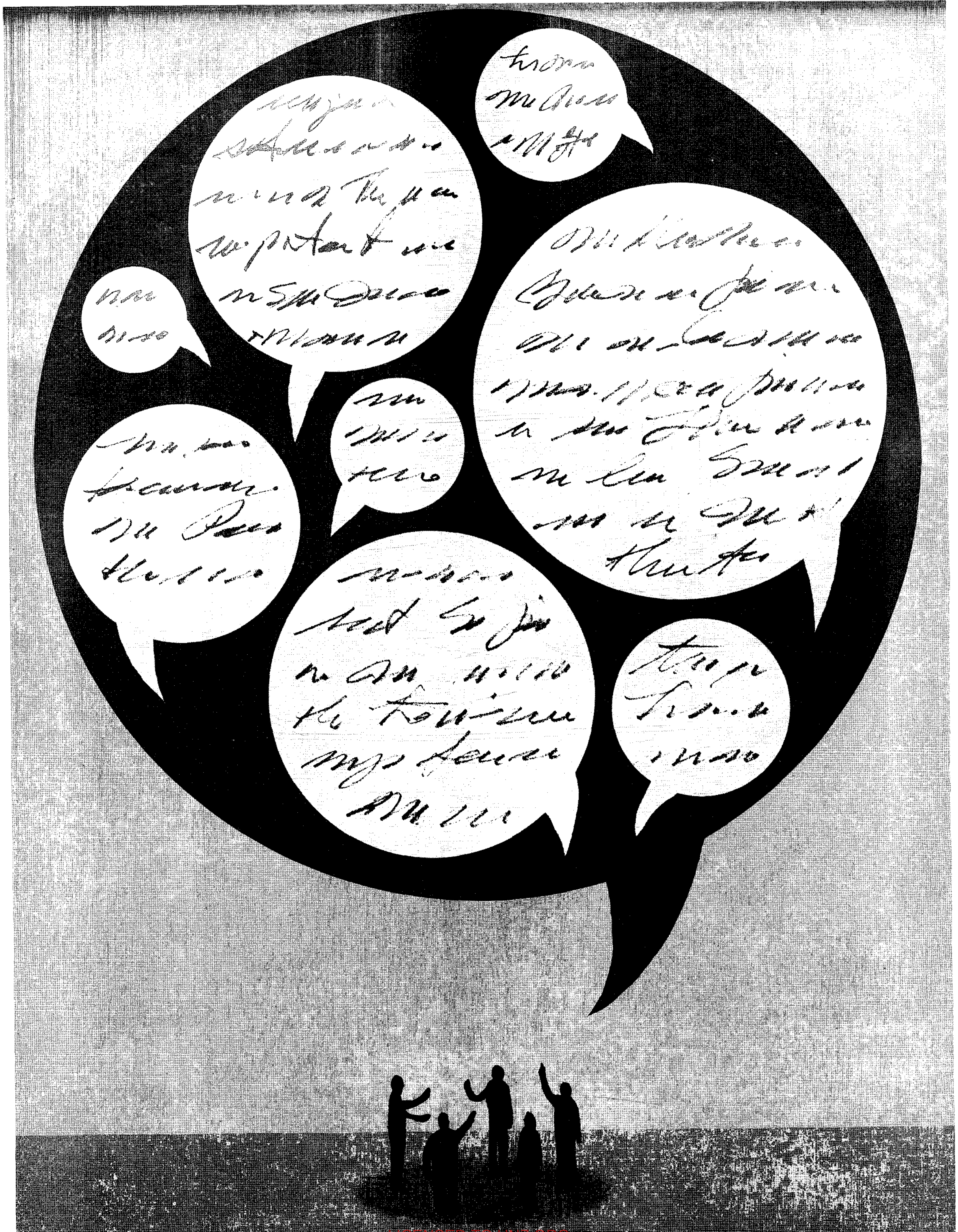
The appellate court ruled that there were only two permissible exceptions to the state's compulsory public education laws: enrollment in a private school or private tutoring by a certified teacher. A strict reading of the state's education code and judicial precedents on home schooling from the 1950s and '60s clearly supported the ruling. But the code and the precedents originated long before the rise of today's large home-schooling movement, with more than 1 million students nationwide as of 2003, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. This made the political circumstances surrounding the case far different from those of past judicial decisions.

If the court was unaware of the size and zeal of the home-school movement, that ignorance was short-lived. Within days the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a national organization with more than 14,000 member families in California, had collected over 250,000 signatures calling on the California Supreme Court to "depublish" the appellate court's ruling, which would strip it of precedential value. As well, a resolution supporting home schooling was quickly introduced in the state legislature. Sensing the groundswell of opposition, the state superintendent of public instruction, Jack O'Connell, announced his disagreement with the decision and promised that the state's policies would not change. Most strikingly, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called the ruling "outrageous" and declared that it "must be overturned by the courts and if the courts don't protect parents' rights then, as elected officials, we will."

Less than a month after the initial ruling the appellate court appeared to back down. The Longs, with the support of California's four home-schooling associations and the HSLDA, petitioned it to rehear the case. The court agreed, vacated the decision, and scheduled a rehearing for June. At the rehearing, the main defender of the court's previous ruling was the California Teachers Association. But dozens of attorneys for the governor, attorney general, state superintendent of schools, home-school associations, and religious liberty organizations urged the court to protect home schooling. Attorney General Jerry Brown explicitly called for the judges to rule that state law already authorizes home schooling, a position that would avoid legislative intervention.

Given the support offered by the political establishment, it seems likely that home schooling will continue in California regardless of what the court decides in its reconsidered opinion. Much like banks that become "too big to fail," home schooling appears to have become too widespread and embedded in educational practice, as well as too well organized and politically effective, to be undone by a judicial opinion.

Joshua Dunn is assistant professor of political science at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs. Martha Derthick is professor emerita of government at the University of Virginia.



THE 2008 *Education Next* – PEPG Survey of PUBLIC OPINION

Americans clearly have had their fill of a sluggish economy and an unpopular war. Their frustration now may also extend to public education. In this, the second annual national survey of U.S. adults conducted under the auspices of *Education Next* and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University, we observe a public that takes an increasingly critical view both of public schools as they exist today and, perhaps ironically, of many prominent reforms designed to improve them.

Local public schools receive lower marks than they did a year ago. More significantly, perhaps, survey respondents claim that their local post offices and police forces outperform their local schools. Meanwhile, support for the most far-reaching federal effort to reform public schools—the No Child Left Behind Act—has slipped. A considerable portion of the public remains undecided about charter schools. And the poll found no enthusiasm for the use of income rather than race as a basis for assigning students to schools.

Americans think less of their schools than of their police departments and post offices

BY WILLIAM G. HOWELL, MARTIN R. WEST,

AND

PAUL E. PETERSON

ILLUSTRATION / KEN ORVIDAS

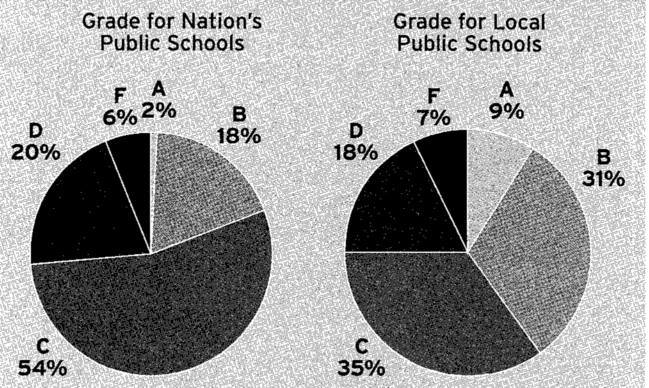
This does not mean that Americans are unwilling to explore alternate ways of educating young people. A large majority of Americans would let their child take some high school courses for credit over the Internet. An equally large majority favor the education of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities in separate classrooms rather than "mainstreaming" them, as is common practice. A plurality support giving parents the option of sending their child to an all-boys or all-girls public school. And a rising number of Americans know someone who is home schooling a child.

These and other findings appear in the 2008 *Education Next*–PEPG survey, which once again examines the views of U.S. adults taken as a whole, as well as those of white, African American, and Hispanic subgroups. In addition to the opinions of respondents from different ethnic backgrounds, we take a special look at those of public school teachers. Responses for the public as a whole and for the subgroups are reported at the bottom of each of the pages that follow. Online at http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext, we include responses to additional questions not discussed in this essay.

Before turning to the main findings, we note an innovation in this year's survey: the increased use of survey experiments, which are rarely employed in national education surveys. By randomly asking respondents slightly different questions about the same issue, we were able to investigate whether adjustments to policies such as national standards, affirmative action, school vouchers, and tax credits could attract broader support. In most cases, the types of policy distinctions that loom large among policy experts have little impact on public opinion. But in one or two instances, most notably the purposes for which online courses might be used, policy changes elicited quite different levels of public support.

Grade C Schools? **(Figure 1)**

Eighty percent of Americans give the nation's public schools a grade of C or worse, while 60 percent assign such grades to the schools in their own community.



Satisfaction with Public Schools

When asked to grade the nation's public schools as a whole, Americans offer decidedly mixed assessments. Most notably, more of them give the schools a D or an F than assign an A or a B. Only 20 percent of survey respondents give the schools in the nation as a whole one of the two top grades, over 50 percent give them a C, and no less than 25 percent grade them with a D or an F. African Americans and Hispanics are even more likely than whites to give the nation's schools low marks. But teachers offer the schools systematically higher grades than the rest of the public. Thirty-four percent give the schools an A or a B, while only 14 percent give them one of the two lowest grades (Q.1).

Satisfaction with Public Schools

1. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in the nation as a whole?

			Racial/Ethnic Identity		
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
A	2%	1%	4%	2%	2%
B	18	18	16	21	32
C	54	57	48	46	51
D	20	18	22	25	13
Fail	6	5	9	7	1

2. How about the public schools in your local community? What grade would you give the public schools here?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
A	9%	10%	6%	9%	15%
B	31	34	18	30	46
C	35	35	44	28	24
D	18	16	20	28	11
Fail	7	6	12	5	5

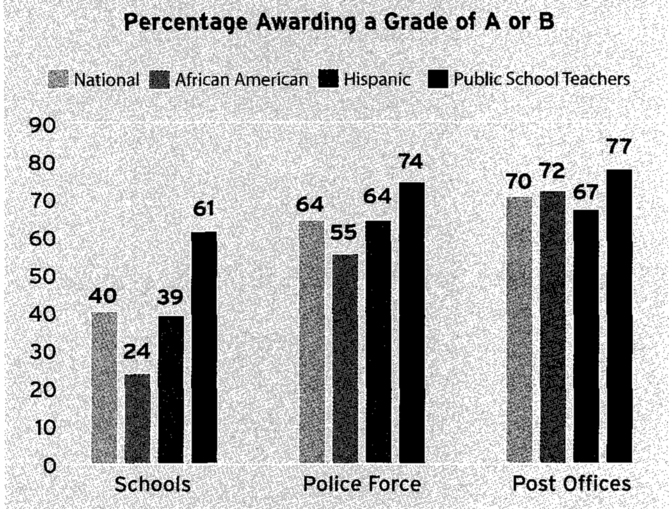
On the whole, survey respondents offered slightly lower evaluations of the nation's schools in 2008 than they did in 2007, and some groups posted sharp declines. Twenty-seven percent of African Americans gave the public schools an A or a B in 2007, but in 2008, that figure fell to 20 percent. Meanwhile, the share of African Americans giving schools a D or an F rose from 20 percent to 31 percent. The share of Hispanics awarding schools a similarly poor grade doubled during the period, from 16 to 32 percent. For results from the 2007 poll, see "What Americans Think about Their Schools," *features*, Fall 2007.

As other surveys have shown, the public's evaluations become somewhat more favorable when the subject turns to the public schools in their own communities (see Figure 1). Forty percent of the public give the public schools in their community an A or a B, while a quarter give them a D or an F. African Americans assign lower marks: only a quarter give their local public schools an A or a B, while a third give them a D or an F. Public school teachers, meanwhile, offer the highest assessments of their local public schools: fully 61 percent give local schools an A or a B, while only 16 percent assign them a D or an F (Q.2).

Comparing Public Schools to Other Local Services

Ratings of local public schools stand in stark contrast to assessments of post offices and police forces. Over 60 percent of respondents give the post offices and police force in their local community an A or a B, and only 10 percent give them a D or an F. Even teachers assign the local post office and police force higher marks than local public schools (see Figure 2). In fact, teachers are twice as likely to give the local post office an A and 50 percent more likely to give the police force an A than they are to similarly grade the local public schools.

At the Back of the Class (Figure 2)
Public schools earn considerably fewer high marks than do the local police force and post offices, even from public school teachers.



Comparing Public Schools to Other Local Services

3. How about the post offices in your local community? What grade would you give the post offices here?

		Racial/Ethnic Identity			
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
A	22%	22%	24%	16%	29%
B	48	48	48	51	48
C	21	20	19	25	18
D	7	8	6	6	4
Fail	3	2	4	2	1

4. How about the police force in your local community? What grade would you give the police here?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
A	19%	20%	16%	21%	22%
B	45	47	39	43	52
C	24	24	31	25	19
D	7	7	8	7	5
Fail	4	3	5	5	1

5. Generally speaking, would you say that the public schools in your community are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Heading in right direction	56%	57%	56%	52%	64%
Off on the wrong track	44	43	44	48	36

Teachers are more than twice as likely to assign their public schools a D or an F as they are to give this rating to the post offices or police in their communities (Q. 3, 4).

A slight majority of those surveyed, nonetheless, think that the public schools in their community are improving. Fifty-six percent of the public say that the local public schools are heading in the right direction, compared to 44 percent who believe they are on the wrong track. In this respect, Americans' views of the nation's education system appear to be considerably more optimistic than their views about the affairs of the nation more generally. When Gallup, NBC and the *Wall Street Journal*, and the Associated Press used the same language to ask Americans about the direction of the nation as a whole while our survey was in the field, less than one-quarter reported that it is on the right track (Q. 5).

No Child Left Behind and School Accountability

With the presidential election in high gear, and Democrats fixing their attention on President Bush's signature education achievement, public support for the No Child Left Behind Act appears to be waning. Whereas 57 percent of the public in 2007 suggested that Congress renew the act as is or with minimal changes, only 50 percent of the public do so in 2008. Comparable declines in support are registered among whites, African Americans, and Hispanics.

Public school teachers are especially critical of the No Child Left Behind Act. Only 26 percent of teachers suggest that Congress renew the act as is or with minimal changes. By contrast, 33 percent suggest that Congress completely overhaul the act, and another 42 percent recommend that Congress not renew the act at all.

No Child Left Behind and School Accountability

6a. As you may know, the No Child Left Behind Act requires states to set standards in math and reading and to test students each year to determine whether schools are making adequate progress, and to intervene when they are not. This year, Congress is deciding whether to renew the No Child Left Behind Act. What do you think Congress should do? Should it...

		Racial/Ethnic Identity			
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Renew the Act as is	21%	20%	26%	21%	11%
Renew with minimal changes	29	28	26	36	15
Renew with major changes	27	26	34	23	33
Not renew at all	24	26	14	20	42

6b. As you may know, federal legislation requires states to set standards in math and reading and to test students each year to determine whether schools are making adequate progress, and to intervene when they are not. This year, Congress is deciding whether to renew this federal legislation. What do you think Congress should do? Should it...

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Renew the Act as is	23%	24%	26%	19%	7%
Renew with minimal changes	34	35	37	25	26
Renew with major changes	27	26	27	40	40
Not renew at all	15	15	11	16	28

Setting National Standards

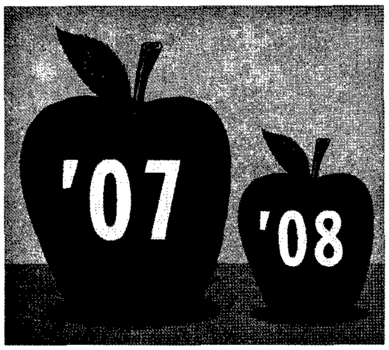
7a. For holding schools accountable, should the federal government establish the same set of educational standards for the whole country and give the same tests in math, science, and reading? Or do you think that there should be different standards and tests in different states?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
One test and standard for all students	69%	69%	71%	69%	54%
Different tests and standards in different states	19	17	22	21	21
No national or state tests should be given	13	14	7	10	25

7b. For holding schools accountable, should all state governments adopt the same set of educational standards and give the same tests in math, science and reading? Or do you think that there should be different standards and tests in different states?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
One test and standard for all students	69%	70%	65%	64%	56%
Different tests and standards in different states	19	18	22	26	24
No national or state tests should be given	11	12	12	10	20

Last year, we presented evidence from an experiment suggesting that the very words "No Child Left Behind" were politically charged. This year we repeated the experiment, which randomly assigned individuals to one of two conditions: the first referred to the act by name, and the second simply identified "federal legislation." The main findings reappear, though the differences are not as large (see Figure 3). Whereas in 2007 the mere reference to "No Child Left Behind" led to a 14-point decline in public support (from 71 to 57 percent), in 2008 support dropped by only 7 points (from 57 to 50 percent) (Q.6).



Survey respondents offered slightly lower evaluations of the nation's schools in 2008 than they did in 2007, and some groups posted sharp declines.

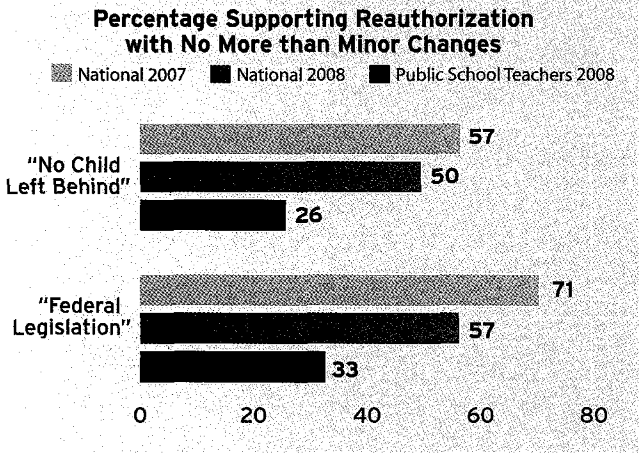
Setting National Standards

Though support for No Child Left Behind is dwindling, Americans continue to believe that schools should be held accountable through national standards and tests. No less than 69 percent of the public think the federal government should set standards for the country and administer tests in math, science, and reading.

But who should set these standards? Washington politicos continue to debate whether the federal government alone or the states together should write these national standards. Other Americans, perhaps to their credit, seem unable to tell the difference. We discovered this by randomly dividing our respondents into two groups, asking one group whether the federal government should set national standards and tests, while asking the other group whether the states jointly should set those standards and tests. Either way, the same high level of support is observed (see Figure 4): exactly 69 percent favor national standards and testing (Q. 7).

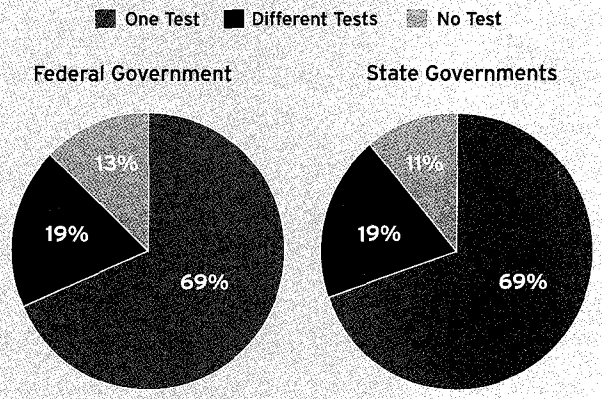
Leaving NCLB Behind (Figure 3)

Fewer Americans support the renewal of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with only minor changes now than did so in 2007, and teachers are especially unlikely to support the law. Support for reauthorization remains higher, however, when the law is described only as federal legislation.



Who Should Set Standards? (Figure 4)

Respondents overwhelmingly support national standards, regardless of whether the federal government or the states design and administer the tests.



Online Education

One of the latest education innovations to go mainstream is online education, wherein students receive credit for courses taken over the Internet. According to the North American Council for Online Learning, enrollment in online courses in 2000 totaled 45,000. By 2007 enrollments had reached 1 million, about 70 percent of which were for high school courses.

Online education, however, is not immune from political controversy. In December 2007, a Wisconsin state court ruled that virtual charter schools, in which students take Internet-based courses under the supervision of their parents, violated the state's legal requirement that all public school teachers be properly licensed. Subsequently, the Wisconsin state legislature allowed existing virtual schools to continue operating, but imposed restrictions on their expansion.

Our respondents, meanwhile, seem quite receptive to the idea of online education for their own children. Fully 69 percent of the public, and a solid majority of every subgroup, say that they "would be willing to have a child [of theirs] go through high school taking some academic courses over the Internet" (Q. 8).

As a matter of public policy, however, the public's willingness to endorse online education very much depends on the justification given for it (see Figure 5). To explore the issue of public funding, we randomly assigned respondents to one of four questions that identified different targets of online education: rural residents, advanced students, students who dropped out of school, and home-schooled children (Q. 9).

When considering online education for either students in rural communities who have "access to only a limited number of course offerings in their public schools" or advanced students interested in taking courses for college credit, the public expresses considerable support. In these two instances, over 60 percent of respondents support public funding for online education. Across the various subgroups, a majority always express support, and no more than 21 percent of any subgroup ever express opposition.

Support for online education declines precipitously, however, when the subject turns to "children who drop out of high

Online Education

8. *Would you be willing to have a child of yours go through high school taking some academic courses over the Internet?

		Racial/Ethnic Identity			
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Willing	69%	71%	73%	56%	68%
Not willing	31	29	27	44	32

9a. High school students in some rural communities have access to only a limited number of course offerings in their public schools. Do you favor or oppose public funding for courses that these students take for credit online over the Internet?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	23%	23%	20%	20%	23%
Somewhat favor	41	42	45	30	40
Neither favor nor oppose	24	20	32	35	15
Somewhat oppose	10	11	3	11	15
Completely oppose	3	4	0	4	6

9b. Some high schools offer advanced courses for which students may be able to receive college credit. Do you favor or oppose public funding for such courses that students take online over the Internet?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	31%	27%	40%	43%	42%
Somewhat favor	37	38	36	40	29
Neither favor nor oppose	18	19	13	9	11
Somewhat oppose	9	11	7	1	13
Completely oppose	5	5	4	7	5

9c. A variety of education programs are currently available to children who drop out of high school. Do you favor or oppose public funding for courses that these students take for credit online over the Internet?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	11%	7%	36%	13%	16%
Somewhat favor	29	29	26	24	22
Neither favor nor oppose	30	32	19	25	23
Somewhat oppose	19	19	10	27	24
Completely oppose	12	13	10	10	15

*Asked only of participants with school-age children in their home school.” For those students, just 40 percent of respondents support public funding for courses taken over the Internet. Another 30 percent neither support nor oppose public funding for online education for students who drop out of high school, and 31 percent oppose funding.

When told that “some parents prefer to educate their high school children at home” rather than to “send them to a school,” support falls even further. Only 26 percent of the public support public funding for courses taken for credit over the Internet by home-schooled youngsters, another 30 percent neither favor nor oppose public funding, and 44 percent oppose. With the exception of African Americans, a plurality of every subgroup, and sometimes a majority, oppose public funding for online education directed at home-schooled children.

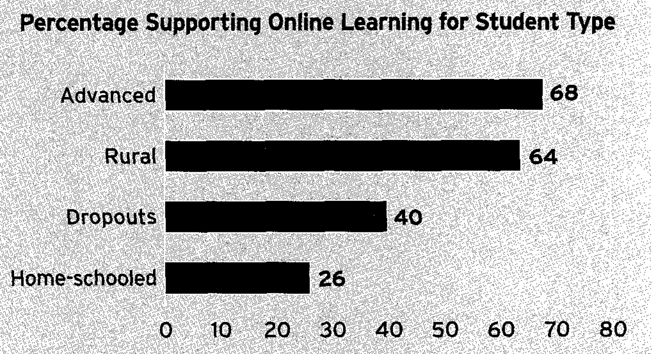
Home Schooling

The advent of online education may be among the factors contributing to the extraordinary growth of home schooling in the United States. The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that, as of 2003, 1.1 million American students were being educated at home, up from 850,000 in 1999. Some home-school advocacy organizations place the current totals at more than 2 million.

The ongoing expansion of home schooling is evident in our survey (see Figure 6). Forty-five percent of our respondents report that they know a family that home schools a child, up from 40 percent in 2007. African Americans are least likely to know a home-schooling family, with only 25 percent responding affirmatively. In contrast, 64 percent of public school teachers report knowing a home-schooling family (Q. 10). These numbers are all far higher than the 12 percent of Americans who report knowing students who have taken a course for middle or high school credit over the Internet.

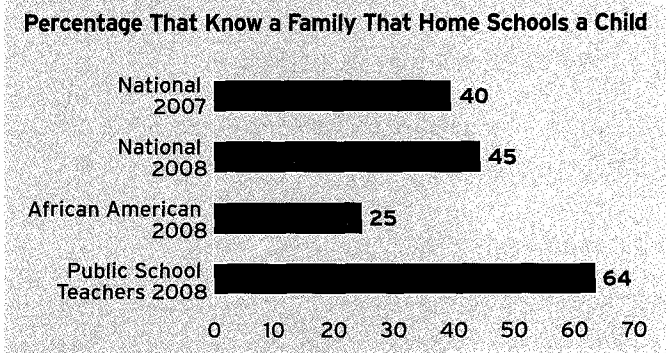
Paying for Online Learning (Figure 5)

Solid majorities favor public funding for online courses taken by high schoolers in need of advanced courses and those in rural schools. Support plummets, however, when the subject turns to courses offered for dropouts and, especially, for home-schooled students.



Home Schooling Growing Familiar (Figure 6)

In 2008, 45 percent of Americans claimed to know a home-schooled child, up 5 percentage points from 2007. Home schooling is less prevalent in African American communities.



9d. Rather than send them to a school, some parents prefer to educate their high school children at home. Do you favor or oppose public funding for courses that these students take for credit online over the Internet?

			Racial/Ethnic Identity		
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	8%	6%	11%	11%	3%
Somewhat favor	18	17	26	21	20
Neither favor nor oppose	30	32	30	21	18
Somewhat oppose	25	25	15	34	33
Completely oppose	19	20	18	14	27

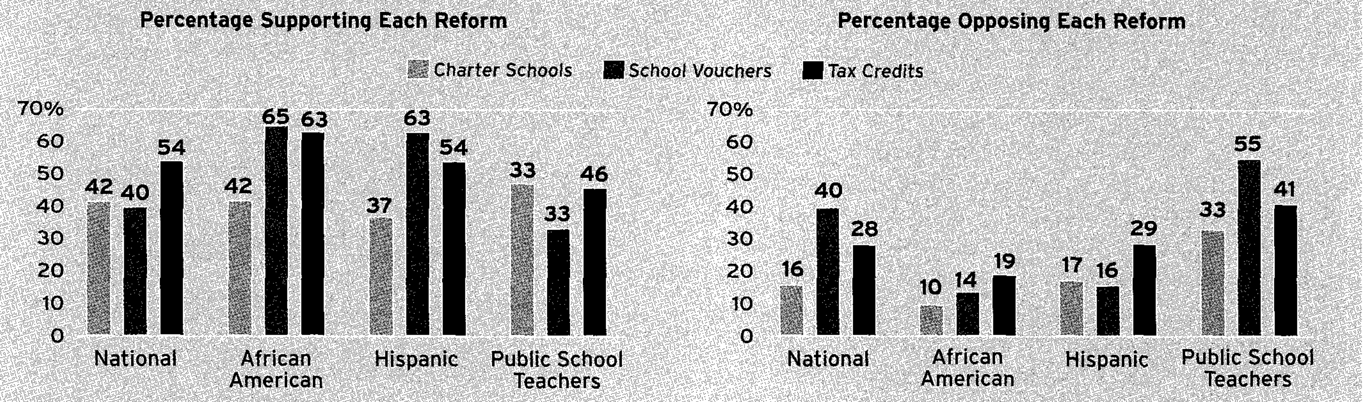
Home Schooling

10. Rather than send them to a school, some parents prefer to educate their children at home. Do you know any family that currently home schools its child?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Yes	45%	49%	25%	32%	64%
No	55	51	75	68	36

Where There's Support...There's Also Opposition (Figure 7)

A majority of the public support tax credits for private schools; similar pluralities support both charters and vouchers, but expressed opposition to charters is less than it is for the other two school choice proposals.



Charter Schools and Vouchers

As they did in 2007, a plurality of the overall public and every subgroup continue to support charter schools. Indeed, supporters of charter schools outnumber opponents more than two to one. The modal response, however, continues to be "neither support nor oppose." Roughly 40 percent of the American public remain undecided about the merits of these schools, even as enrollment in charter schools has expanded to more than 1.2 million students nationwide (Q. 11).

Though Americans have yet to render a verdict on charter schools, they appear evenly divided on vouchers (see Figure 7). For the public as a whole, the number of supporters equals the number of opponents, with only one-fifth of the population refusing to stake out a position one way or

Charter Schools and Vouchers

11. Many states permit the formation of charter schools, which are publicly funded but are not managed by the local school board. These schools are expected to meet promised objectives, but are exempt from many state regulations. Do you support or oppose the formation of charter schools?

		Racial/Ethnic Identity			
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely support	16%	15%	15%	14%	18%
Somewhat support	26	27	27	23	29
Neither support nor oppose	41	41	48	46	20
Somewhat oppose	10	10	9	11	16
Completely oppose	6	7	1	6	17

12a. A proposal has been made that would use government funds to help pay the tuition of low-income students whose families would like them to attend private schools. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

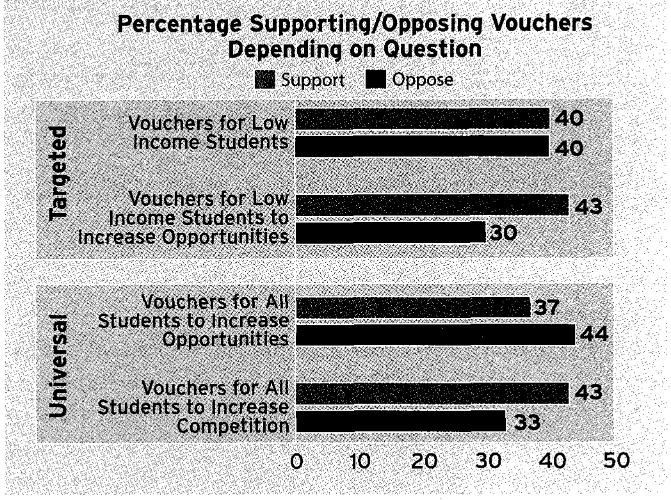
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	14%	10%	32%	19%	9%
Somewhat favor	26	19	33	44	24
Neither favor nor oppose	20	20	20	21	12
Somewhat oppose	18	23	5	9	22
Completely oppose	22	28	9	7	33

12b. A proposal has been made that would use government funds to help pay the tuition of low-income students whose families would like them to attend private schools. Some people say that such a program would improve the educational opportunities available to the poor. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	16%	12%	28%	18%	15%
Somewhat favor	27	26	27	29	21
Neither favor nor oppose	27	25	35	29	12
Somewhat oppose	15	19	3	8	25
Completely oppose	15	17	7	15	26

Selling School Vouchers (Figure 8)

Support for vouchers does not depend much on whether they are offered only to low-income families or to all.



the other. As we observed last year, support for vouchers is highest among African Americans and Hispanics. Within these two groups, supporters outnumber opponents by as much as five to one. By contrast, a majority of public school teachers oppose vouchers (Q. 12).

School choice advocates often debate the relative benefits of directing vouchers toward all children or just to those of low-income families. Some argue that vouchers targeted to low-income families more clearly serve the goal of enhancing equal opportunity and will win broader political support for that reason. Others insist that universal vouchers, available to all families, will have stronger political backing and are the only way to generate the competition between the public and the private sectors that is needed to stimulate broad improvements in school quality.

To gauge the public's views about such matters, we conducted another experiment. First, we randomly assigned respondents to one of four groups. One group was asked their opinion about the provision of school vouchers to low-income families so their children could attend private schools. Another group was asked the same question but was also told that some people say such a program would create greater equality of opportunity. A third group was asked their opinion about vouchers for any family that desired to send their child to private schools, regardless of the family income. A fourth group was asked the same question but was told that some people say such a program would create more competition for public schools. For the most part, both the public as a whole and the various groups appear equally likely to support proposals that would use government funds to help pay the private school tuitions of either "low-income students" or "all students." African Americans and Hispanics slightly prefer targeted voucher programs, while whites prefer universal programs.

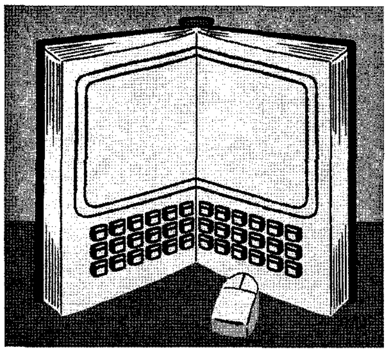
Nor do appeals to competition and equal opportunity hold much sway over the American public (see Figure 8). When told that some people say that a universal program "would introduce much needed competition to the public school system," overall support for vouchers increases by just a few percentage points. Among African Americans, the percentage who "completely favor" the program actually drops by 22 points. And when told that some people say that a universal program "would improve the educational opportunities available to the poor," overall support for vouchers does not change at all (Q. 12b-d).

12c. A proposal has been made that would use government funds to help pay the tuition of all students whose families would like them to attend private schools. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

		Racial/Ethnic Identity			
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	14%	14%	26%	8%	12%
Somewhat favor	23	22	24	29	18
Neither favor nor oppose	18	18	24	15	4
Somewhat oppose	22	22	23	22	21
Completely oppose	22	24	3	26	45

12d. A proposal has been made that would use government funds to help pay the tuition of all students whose families would like them to attend private schools. Some people say that such a program would introduce much needed competition to the public school system. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	17%	19%	4%	17%	14%
Somewhat favor	26	20	46	38	20
Neither favor nor oppose	25	22	26	28	21
Somewhat oppose	17	19	16	3	15
Completely oppose	16	19	7	14	30



> **Fully 69 percent of the public, and a solid majority of every subgroup, say that they "would be willing to have a child [of theirs] go through high school taking some academic courses over the Internet."**

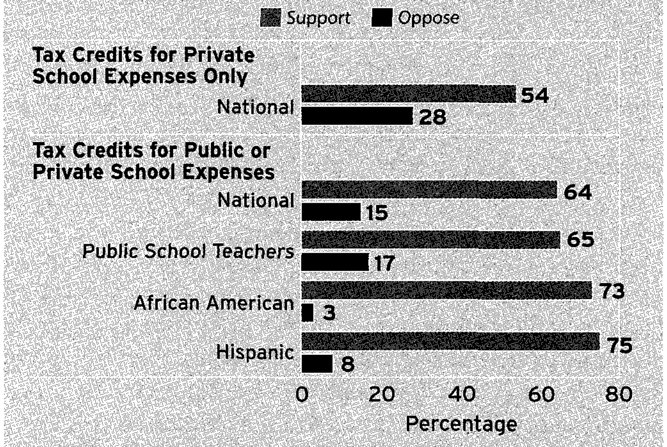
Tax Credits

As an alternative to school vouchers, some states (Arizona, Minnesota, Florida, and Pennsylvania) have established tax credit programs that offset the costs of attending private or public schools. In Pennsylvania, for example, tax credits help cover the costs of school fees, supplies, and computers. To investigate the public's support for different types of tax credit programs, we randomly asked different groups of respondents separate questions concerning tax credit policy, sometimes referring to programs that only benefit private school students, and sometimes to programs that benefit both private and public school students.

No matter how the question is worded, tax credits elicit higher levels of support than do school vouchers (see Figure 9). A solid majority of the public as a whole, and a plurality of every subgroup, support education tax credits for low- and moderate-income parents who send their children to private schools. African Americans register the highest levels of support, with proponents outnumbering opponents three to one. When tax credits are used to offset

Tax Credits for All, Supported by All (Figure 9)

Tax credits for educational expenses elicit widespread support, especially when available to families with children in both public and private schools.



Tax Credits

13a. A proposal has been made to offer a tax credit for educational expenses (fees, supplies, computers, and tuition) to low- and moderate-income parents who send their children to private schools. Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?

	National	Racial/Ethnic Identity			Public School Teachers
		White	African American	Hispanic	
Completely favor	22%	20%	26%	27%	18%
Somewhat favor	32	32	37	27	28
Neither favor nor oppose	19	20	18	16	12
Somewhat oppose	15	15	17	13	15
Completely oppose	13	14	2	16	26

13b. A proposal has been made to offer a tax credit for educational expenses (fees, supplies, computers, and tuition) to low- and moderate-income parents who send their children to public and private schools. Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely favor	25%	22%	31%	29%	27%
Somewhat favor	39	39	42	46	38
Neither favor nor oppose	21	22	24	17	18
Somewhat oppose	8	10	2	4	8
Completely oppose	7	8	1	4	9

expenses for both private and public school students, overall support rises by another 10 percentage points. Two subgroups are especially likely to affirm the most expansive scope of the tax credit program: African Americans and Hispanics, among whom opposition to the program virtually vanishes (Q. 13).

School Integration

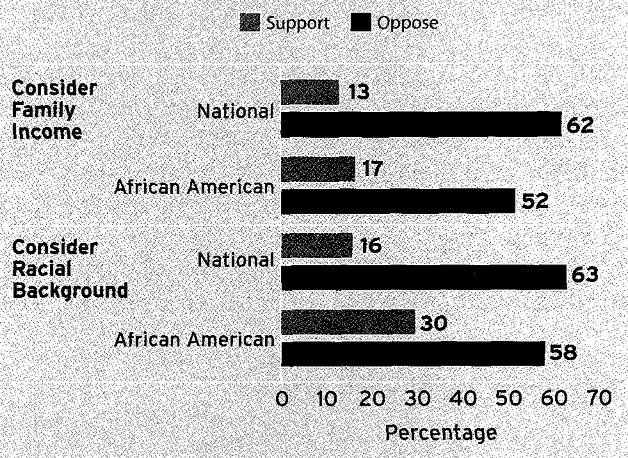
In June 2007, a bitterly divided Supreme Court ruled that public school districts may not foster integration through enrollment programs that take explicit account of students' race. The justices' landmark decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* struck down voluntarily adopted integration programs in Seattle and Jefferson County, Kentucky, and called into question similar race-based systems that operate in hundreds of other districts.

Now that districts may not consider the race of students when assigning them to schools, some policy experts argue that family income might be employed as a substitute criterion. Since minority students tend to come from lower-income families, racial integration might be achieved indirectly by giving low-income families their choice of school, whenever that would facilitate integration across socioeconomic lines. The Wake County school district in North Carolina, among others, has won favorable media coverage by introducing such a policy.

To investigate the public's views about race- and income-based enrollment programs, we asked Americans one of two variations of the following question: "In order to promote diversity, should public school districts be allowed to take the racial background [family income] of students into account when assigning students to schools?"

To the version of the question asking about "racial background," the public reacts very negatively. Only 16 percent of the public respond that districts "definitely" or "probably" should be allowed to take students' racial background into account when assigning them to schools. Another 21 percent of the public are unsure, while fully 63 percent of the public say that school districts should not take into account students' racial background. African Americans are much more likely to support the idea, but still only 30

Pursuing Diversity (Figure 10)
The public strongly opposes assigning students to schools based on either race or family income in order to promote diversity.



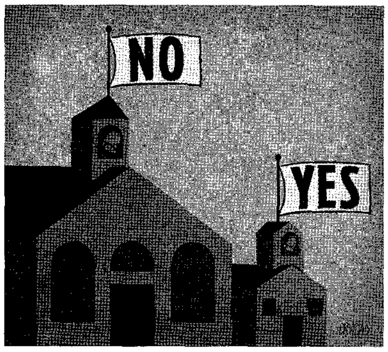
School Integration

14a. In order to promote school diversity, should public school districts be allowed to take the racial background of students into account when assigning students to schools?

		Racial/Ethnic Identity			
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Definitely	5%	4%	7%	4%	4%
Probably	11	10	23	10	15
Not sure	21	21	12	26	20
Probably not	21	23	15	19	27
Definitely not	42	42	43	40	34

14b. In order to promote school diversity, should school districts be allowed to take the family income of students into account when assigning students to schools?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Definitely	4%	3%	9%	5%	5%
Probably	9	8	8	12	12
Not sure	25	23	31	24	20
Probably not	23	24	21	23	24
Definitely not	39	41	31	36	38



Neither teachers nor the public as a whole express much support for the practice of mainstreaming emotionally or behaviorally disabled children. A majority say they should be "taught in separate settings" instead.

percent of them think districts should be allowed to take race into account (Q. 14a). Though the Supreme Court was closely divided in the Seattle case, the majority decision has broad public support.

But what if the policy is adjusted to use family income as the basis for assigning students to schools? Does public support then increase? Not at all. In fact, public support for the idea dips slightly (see Figure 10). Just 13 percent of respondents report that they support using family income as a basis for assigning students to a school, while 62 percent say that they are opposed, with the balance uncertain (Q. 14b). Legal experts who wish to circumvent the recent Supreme Court decision by shifting from race to family income clearly have yet to make much headway in the court of public opinion.

Mainstreaming the Disabled

Approximately 15 percent of the country's elementary and secondary school population have been classified as needing special education, which is partially supported by federal funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Diagnoses can range from minor learning problems to autism and severe mental retardation to a range of emotional and behavioral disabilities. Whatever the disability, the law mandates that a disabled student be educated

Mainstreaming the Disabled

15. Some people say that students who have been diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disabilities should be taught in regular classrooms with other students. Other people say that these students should be taught in separate settings at the school. What do you think should be done with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities?

	National	Racial/Ethnic Identity			Public School Teachers
		White	African American	Hispanic	
Should be taught in regular classrooms.	28%	27%	28%	30%	25%
Should be taught in separate settings.	72	73	72	70	75

Single-Sex Public Schools

16. Some people have proposed that public school districts offer parents the option of sending their child to an all-boys or all-girls school. What do you think about this proposal?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Completely support	13%	11%	14%	17%	15%
Somewhat support	24	24	29	23	32
Neither support nor oppose	37	38	36	37	28
Somewhat oppose	14	16	10	14	12
Completely oppose	11	11	10	9	13

17. *Would you consider sending your own child to an all-boys or all-girls school?

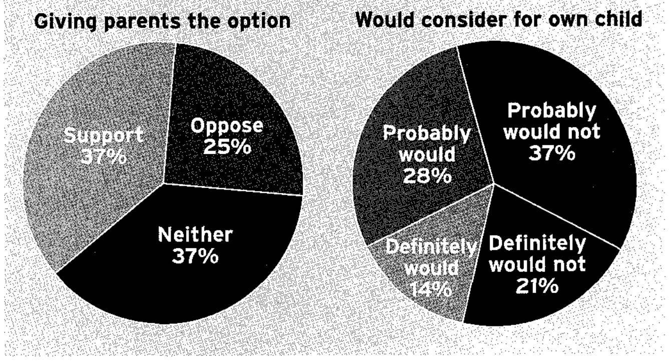
	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Definitely would consider	14%	12%	21%	13%	12%
Probably would consider	28	27	32	31	36
Probably would not consider	37	38	28	40	30
Definitely would not consider	21	23	20	16	22

*Asked only of participants with school-age children in their home in the "least restrictive environment," a phrase that implies differential treatment depending on the disability, but increasingly has come to mean the "mainstreaming" in standard classrooms of all but those with the most severe disabilities. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the share of disabled students considered to be "fully mainstreamed" has risen from a little more than 30 percent in 1989 to over 55 percent in 2005. Between 1995 and 2005, the share of "emotionally disturbed children" who spend more than 80 percent of their time in a regular classroom jumped from 17 to 35 percent.

Neither teachers nor the public as a whole express much support for the practice of mainstreaming emotionally or behaviorally disabled children. When asked whether students "who have been diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disabilities should be taught in regular classrooms with other students," only 25 percent of teachers, and 28 percent of the public, favor the idea. The rest say they should be "taught in separate settings instead" (Q. 15).

Single-Sex Schools Are a Fine Idea...But Mayble Not for My Child (Figure 11)

More than one-third of Americans feel parents should have the option of sending their child to a single-sex school, while only one-quarter disagree. Yet only about two out of every five parents would consider a single-sex school for their own child.



Single-Sex Public Schools

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in single-sex public schools. Once derided as harmful and anachronistic, the notion of educating boys and girls separately received a major boost in 2006 with the publication of new federal regulations clarifying the legal status of single-sex schools and classrooms. The National Association for Single Sex Public Education projects that, in fall 2008, roughly 400 public schools will offer students at least some opportunity for single-sex education, and a quarter of these schools will enroll only boys or girls.

The American public seems moderately sympathetic to this development (see Figure 11). Thirty-seven percent of respondents support the idea of public school districts offering parents the option of sending their child to a single-sex school, 25 percent oppose the idea, and the remainder are undecided. Support for providing the option of single-sex education is stronger among public school teachers, 47 percent of whom support the idea (Q. 16). Interestingly, women respondents are modestly more likely than men to support single-sex alternatives (39 versus 35 percent).

We also asked parents of school-age children whether they would consider enrolling their own child in a single-sex school. Here responses are more mixed, with more parents reporting that they probably or definitely would not consider doing so than report that they would. Still, 42 percent of all parents, 48 percent of public school teachers, and fully 53 percent of African Americans say that they would consider sending their child to a single-sex school (Q. 17).

The 2008 Presidential Election

Education received scant attention in the 2008 presidential primaries and seems unlikely to emerge as a major issue in the general election. For this, Republican candidates can be grateful. When asked which party "has a better record on

The 2008 Presidential Election

18. All things considered, which party do you think has the better record on education issues?

	National	Racial/Ethnic Identity White	 African American	 Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Democrat	61%	54%	91%	74%	68%
Republican	39	46	9	26	32

19. All things considered, which party do you think is more likely to improve the nation's schools?

	National	White	African American	Hispanic	Public School Teachers
Democrat	62%	55%	89%	75%	68%
Republican	38	45	11	25	32

education issues" and which party "is more likely to improve the nation's schools," Americans give a clear edge to the Democrats. Sixty-one percent of respondents rate the Democrats' record on education more favorably, and 62 percent think them more likely to improve the public schools. Teachers prefer the Democrats by even larger margins, as do Hispanics and African Americans (Q. 18, 19).

As one might expect, deep partisan divisions underlie this Democratic advantage. On matters involving education, Democrats and Republicans both tend to favor members of their party. They do so, however, with varying levels of conviction. Whereas self-identified Democrats prefer their own party on education by margins of roughly 10 to 1, Republicans do so by margins of just 3 to 1.

Such striking imbalance in the parties' credibility on education marks a departure from the pattern observed in 2000, when polls compiled by political scientist Patrick McGuinn showed that only 44 percent of Americans thought that the Democrats would do a better job of improving education, compared with 41 percent who favored the GOP in this area. Our 2008 findings reveal a return to the patterns seen in the 1980s and 1990s, when voters consistently favored the Democrats on education by margins of 20 percentage points or more.

Conclusion

With the election season in full swing, this survey offers certain lessons for the two contenders for the U.S. presidency. If Barack Obama and John McCain want to walk in step with the American public, they should acknowledge the flagging performance of schools, for while Americans retain an abiding commitment to public education, the grades that they assign the nation's schools are increasingly mediocre. Additionally, the candidates should convey support for the principle of accountability, while recognizing the faults of the particular accountability system mandated by No Child Left Behind. Finally, the candidates should remain open to new models of education provision. Though Americans continue to reflect upon the merits of charters, vouchers, online education, and home schooling, an overwhelming majority profess support for at least one of these alternatives to traditional public schools.

William G. Howell is associate professor in the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. Martin R. West is assistant professor of education at Brown University and an executive editor of Education Next. *Paul E. Peterson is professor of government at Harvard University, senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, and editor-in-chief of* Education Next.

Survey Methods

This survey, sponsored by *Education Next* and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University, was conducted by the polling firm Knowledge Networks (KN) between February 16 and March 15, 2008. KN maintains a nationally representative panel of adults, obtained via list-assisted random digit-dialing sampling techniques, who agree to participate in a limited number of online surveys. Because KN offers members of its panel free Internet access and a WebTV device that connects to a telephone and television, the sample is not limited to current computer owners or users with Internet access. When recruiting for the panel, KN sends out an advance mailing and follows up with at least 15 dial attempts. The panel, then, is updated quarterly. Detailed information about the maintenance of the KN panel, the protocols used to administer surveys, and the comparability of online and telephone surveys is available online (www.knowledgenetworks.com/quality/).

The main findings from the *Education Next*-PEPG survey reported in this essay are based on a nationally representative stratified sample of 2,500 adults (age 18 years and older) and an oversample of 700 public school teachers. The sample consists of 2,546 non-Hispanic whites, 250 non-Hispanic blacks, and 239 Hispanics. We use poststratification population weights to adjust for survey nonresponse as well as for the oversampling of teachers. These weights ensure that the observed demographic characteristics of the final sample match the known characteristics of the national adult population.

In general, survey responses based on larger numbers of observations are more precise, that is, less prone to sampling variance, than those made across groups with fewer numbers of observations. As a consequence, answers attributed to the national population are more precisely estimated than are those attributed to subgroups. With 3,200 total respondents, the margin of error for responses given by the full sample in the *Education Next*-PEPG survey is roughly 1 percentage point.

On many items, we conducted experiments to examine the effect of variations in the way questions are posed. The figures and tables present separately the results for the different experimental conditions.

Percentages do not always add precisely to 100 as a result of rounding to the nearest percentage point.

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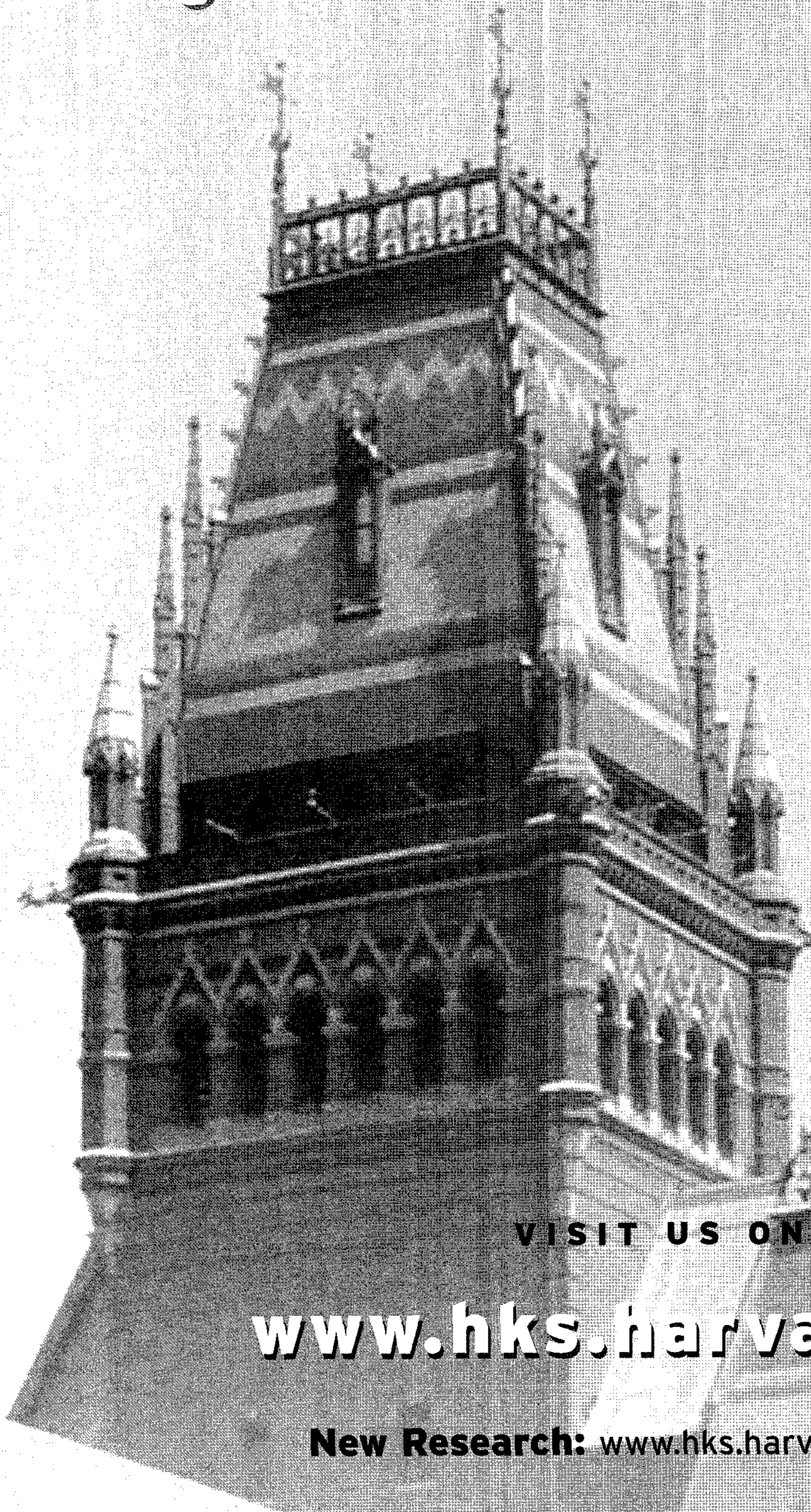

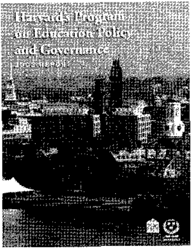

PEPG 2008 Program Report

An appraisal of the program's recent research activities, their policy impact, and influence in the arena of K-12 education policy.

The full report is available at:
www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Annual_Reports/2008AR.pdf

School Choice International
Rajashri Chakrabarti and Paul E. Peterson, eds.
MIT Press, 2008

Public-private partnerships in education policy play an important role in enhancing the supply as well as the quality of human capital. In recent years, there has been a burgeoning of public-private partnerships in different parts of the world. The essays in this volume study public-private partnerships in different parts of the world, such as the Americas, Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Schools and the Equal Opportunity Problem
Ludger Woessmann and Paul E. Peterson, eds.
MIT Press, 2007

Leading researchers from the United States and Europe report on new findings on the effect of education on equal opportunity, using economic and statistical techniques to assess the results of education policy reform in countries including the United States, Britain, Sweden, Germany, and Italy.

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PEPG

The Education of a President (Figure 1)

Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson were largely self-taught; the majority of their successors attended public schools.

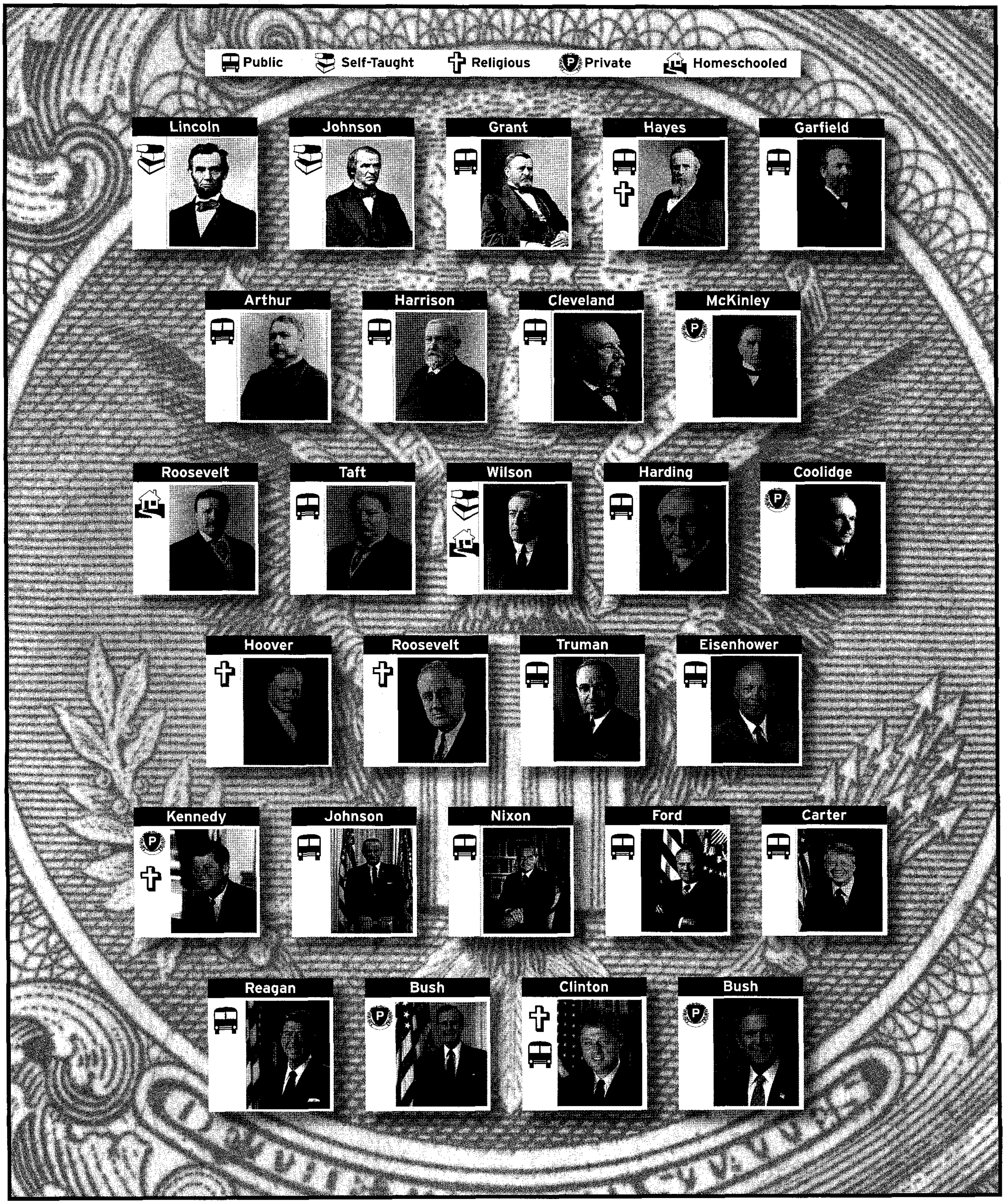
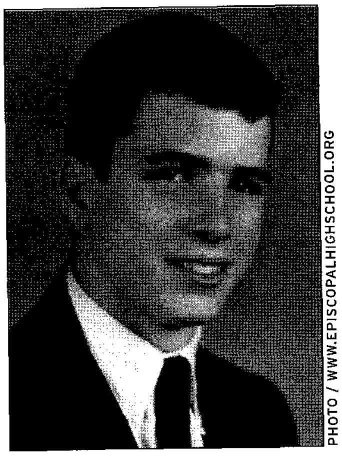

Public
Self-Taught
Religious
Private
Homeschooled
Lincoln
Johnson
Grant
Hayes
Garfield
Arthur
Harrison
Cleveland
McKinley
Roosevelt
Taft
Wilson
Harding
Coolidge
Hoover
Roosevelt
Truman
Eisenhower
Kennedy
Johnson
Nixon
Ford
Carter
Reagan
Bush
Clinton
Bush

ILLUSTRATION / BRUCE SANDERS DESIGN

The Early Education of Our Next President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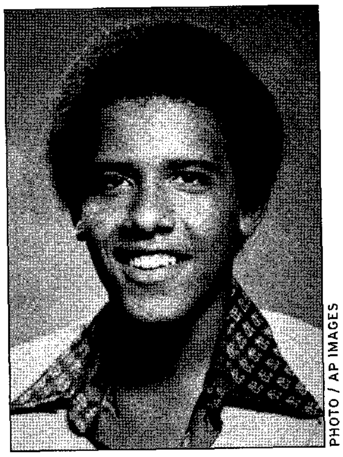


PHOTO / AP IMAGES

John McCain is a child of the thirties. We have yet to have a president who was born in that turbulent decade. Barack Obama is a child of the sixties, another decade yet to produce a president.

Not much in public schools

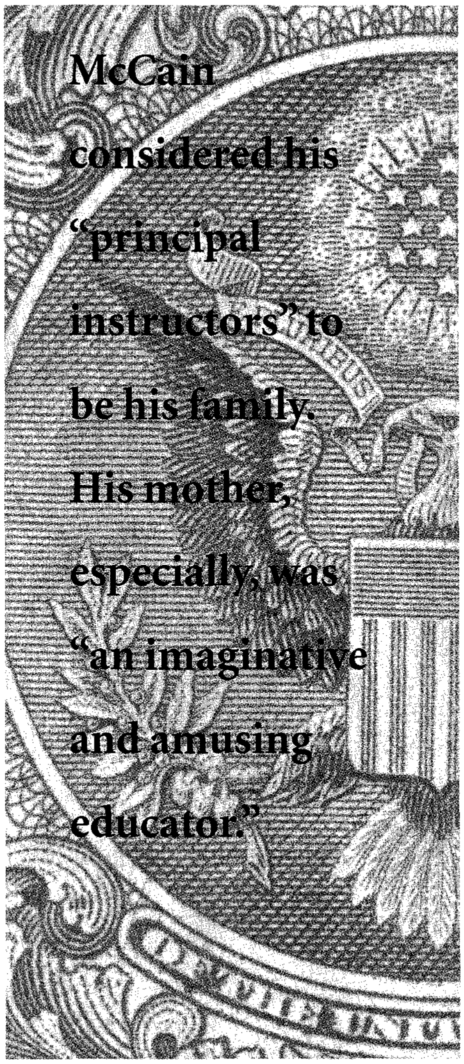
BY PETER MEYER

One of them, Barack Obama, was awakened at four in the morning in Jakarta to study from a correspondence course; the other, John McCain, attended grade school in old airplane hangars. Both went on to elite private high schools.

Whether it is the image of Abraham Lincoln studying by log cabin candlelight or George Washington dutifully copying the *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation* into his schoolboy notebooks, presidential schooling has long been a national fascination (see Figure 1).

Today we have a graduate of Columbia College and Harvard Law (Obama) taking on a graduate of the Naval Academy and National War College (McCain). Harvard boasts seven presidents as alumni (including George W. Bush's business degree); the Naval Academy, just one (Jimmy Carter). But it is the early schooling—how did they get there?—that is most fascinating. George Washington's early education is remarkable for what is not known about it, but there is general agreement that if he had much formal education, it ended at about age 15. Teddy Roosevelt, said to have had an "uneven" education at home (strong in biology, French, and German but deficient in math, Latin, and Greek), graduated from Harvard *magna cum laude.* Harry Truman, the only president since 1897 who did not graduate from college, got up early too, at five in the morning, to practice piano.

We might ponder the fact that neither John McCain nor Barack Obama had the experience of attending the public school down the street, standard fare for most Americans. Just how the two candidates' early schooling informs their assumptions and beliefs about education reform is hard to know, but their stories provide an interesting window through which to view their policy beliefs (see sidebar, page 33).



McCain considered his "principal instructors" to be his family. His mother, especially, was "an imaginative and amusing educator."

Unique Men— In Similar Ways

After a grueling primary season this year—for the Democrats, at least—it seems in retrospect that there was something inevitable in the pairing of John McCain and Barack Obama as the two contenders for the presidency in 2008. Two distinct generations, two unique backgrounds, two very different worldviews: white/black, old/young, right/left.

John McCain is a child of the thirties (born in Panama, August 29, 1936), and more than one commentator has noted the fact that we have yet to have a president who was born in that turbulent decade. He grew up in the middle of a hellish war in which his father and grandfather were both fighting.

Obama is a child of the sixties (born in Hawaii, August 4, 1961, another decade yet to produce a president) and like McCain in the 1940s, though too young to call it his war, came of age in the middle of a hellish conflict.

McCain is like an old shoe, known to us since that heroic return in 1973 from five and a half years of captivity in Vietnam. Obama is the new sneaker, a little-known Illinois state legislator before he delivered an electrifying keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. Just two years later (October 23, 2006) he graced the coveted cover of *Time,* with the provocative headline, "Why Barack Obama Could Be the Next President."

Judging from their published memoirs, the early education of both men came mainly from what they were taught at home. If one goes by book titles—*Dreams from My Father* (Obama, 1995) and *Faith of My Fathers* (McCain, 1999)—Dad was key, but in fact both credit their mothers for much of their success. "What is best in me I owe to her," says Obama about his mother, Ann, who died in 1995 at age 52 of ovarian cancer. John McCain calls his mother, Roberta, age 96 and still a presence on the campaign trail, his principal teacher, and much of the story of his early life, as he writes, is how "I became my mother's son."

Despite their book titles, both candidates in fact grew up missing their fathers. In Obama's case, Barack Sr. left Hawaii (bound for Harvard) when his son was a baby; he didn't return until Barack Jr. was in 5th grade, and then only for a four-week visit. For McCain the separation was more institutional, as McCain's father, a Navy submariner, was gone for long periods of time, including most of World War II, when the future presidential candidate was just starting school. For both Obama and McCain, the "missing" fathers explain in part their unique early educational experiences.

McCain: "Mother's Mobile Classroom"

The essential McCain is a warrior, or so his autobiography portrays him. "For two centuries, the men of my family were raised to go to war as officers in America's armed services," he writes.

One of his first memories is of a December day in 1941. He was just five and his family was standing on the front lawn of their house in New London, Connecticut, site of the Navy's first submarine base, when a passing black car slowed down and the driver, a naval officer, rolled his window down and shouted at his father, "Jack, the Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor." McCain's father left immediately. "I saw very little of him for the next four years," McCain writes.

Born in America's Panama Canal Zone, where both his father and grandfather were stationed, John McCain's life pattern was set almost immediately: at three months old he moved, thanks to his father's transfer, to the submarine base in New London. The family relocated frequently to accommodate his father's assignments. Though McCain says he went to more schools than he can remember in those early years, *USA Today* reports he "attended some 20 schools before Annapolis, where he graduated fifth from the bottom in 1958."

"My mother often despaired over the quality of our education," recalls McCain. "When asked today how her children were educated, she is apt to respond that we were 'raised to be ignorant.'"

McCain calls the base schools "substandard." Sometimes the schoolhouse was "nothing more than a converted aircraft hangar," he writes. "The classes mixed children of varying ages. We might have one teacher on Monday and a different one on Tuesday. On other days, we lacked the services of any teacher at all." Needless to say, he was "often required in a new school to study things I had already learned. Other times, the curriculum assumed knowledge I had not yet acquired."

If the accommodations and scheduling were not idiosyncratic enough, the frequent moves, says McCain, were the "chief obstacle to a decent education.... As soon as I had begun to settle into a school, my father would be reassigned." Though McCain says that such a "transient childhood" was simply a way of life, it was not a life lived by most Americans. "Seldom if ever did I see again the friends I left behind," he says. (Years later he was accused at a candidate forum of being a carpetbagger by running for office in Arizona. "Listen, pal," McCain shot back, "I spent 22 years in the Navy.... The place I lived longest in my life was Hanoi.") The moves also exacerbated a defensiveness about fitting in that in turn contributed to the young McCain's lifelong bad-boy reputation. At each new school he made a point, he says, "to impress upon my classmates that I was not a person to suffer slights lightly" and "grew more determined to assert my crude individualism." He was disciplined regularly, "often for fighting."

Not surprisingly, perhaps, McCain liked this early schooling "for the very quality that caused my parents to despair—its informality." But he also admits to developing his own interest in literature. He spent the summer of 1946 with his widowed grandmother at her home, where he occupied a bedroom furnished with his father's belongings, including a "substantial collection of the authors he had favored as a boy." Those authors included Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Booth Tarkington. "I spent most of the summer reading one volume after another," he says. The experience gave McCain a "lifelong love of reading."

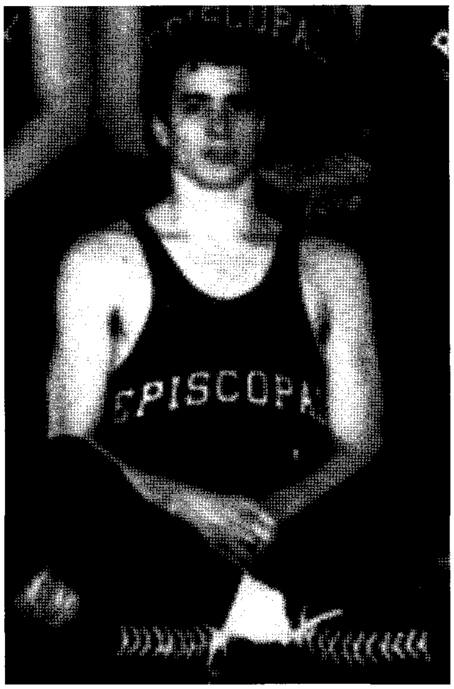


PHOTO / WWW.EPISCOPALHIGHSCHOOL.ORG

He arrived at Episcopal High School, McCain recalls, "with a little bit of a chip on my shoulder."

But in the end, McCain considered his "principal instructors" to be his family. His mother, especially, was "an imaginative and amusing educator." The daughter of a successful oil wildcatter, Roberta Wright ran off to Tijuana to marry Jack McCain, then a young Navy ensign. "Society coed elopes with navy officer: Roberta Wright defies family," ran a headline in the *San Francisco Examiner* at the time. As *Time* magazine reported, "Just 19, she brought her college textbooks on her honeymoon."

Married 48 years (Jack McCain died in 1981), Roberta never complained about the long absences from her husband and would later comment on the Navy lifestyle, sounding remarkably like her presidential candidate son when he speaks of the teaching profession (see sidebar). "If you chose the Navy, you do what it requires. A lot of wives didn't like that, and thankfully they left."

It is no wonder that McCain attributes most of his early learning—and his reputation as a "hell-raiser"—to "my mother's mobile classroom." Roberta used the many family relocations as teaching opportunities for her children (John has a younger brother and an older sister). "Field trips" included stops at the Carlsbad Caverns, the Grand Canyon, the Petrified Forest, George Washington's Mount Vernon, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, and dozens of museums, churches, buildings designed by celebrated architects, natural phenomena, and the homes of historical figures all over the country. During one cross-country trip, Roberta brought along a couple of college students to help keep the kids in line. (She had reached "the end of her maternal patience," McCain recalls, after throwing a thermos, while driving, at her disruptive son—"hitting me on the brow, knocking me temporarily mute, and denting the thermos.")

McCain's parents "resolved finally to put an end to our haphazard education" and enrolled the young John in Episcopal High School, a prep school in suburban Virginia, to give him some consistency in his schooling. And he arrived, he recalls, "with a little bit of a chip on my shoulder."

Years later, still the disciplinarian, Roberta scolded her son after reading that he had sworn at his Hanoi captors.

"He better never speak like that again," she told a journalist, "or I'll smack him bald-headed. Of course, he almost already is."

Obama: The Importance of Race

One of Barack Obama's first memories is sitting on his grandfather's shoulders watching one of the *Apollo* mission astronauts arriving at Hickam Air Force Base, not far from Pearl Harbor. But the moral for Obama was very different than it would have been for warrior McCain. "With his black son-in-law and his brown grandson," recalls Obama, "Gramps had entered the space age." The moral was a racial one.

It is clear from *Dreams from My Father*, which is subtitled *A Story of Race and Inheritance*, that Obama sees much of his essence as that of a black man. "A black man with a funny name," he would joke when first running for office, in the Illinois state senate. Racial identity is as much at the core of Obama's political being as prisoner of war is John McCain's trademark. "I ceased to advertise my mother's race [white] at the age of twelve or thirteen," he says, "when I began to suspect that by doing so I was ingratiating myself to whites." Obama goes out of his way to highlight his struggles with the issues of his race in his autobiography. "I was trying to raise myself to be a black man in America," he writes in *Dreams*.

Barack Obama's first defining experience was being born to a white mother and black father, a biracial baby arriving at a time when America was seething with racial tension. His mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, whose parents were Kansas natives, was born on an army base during World War II and then moved with her parents to California, then to Texas and Washington where her father was pursuing furniture business opportunities, before landing in Honolulu. Ann met Barack Obama Sr., a native of Kenya who came to Hawaii to study economics, during a Russian class at the University of Hawaii.

It was fortunate, perhaps, as Obama writes in his memoir, that the Dunhams' daughter brought a black man home in Hawaii, where "race-mixing" could happen without upsetting the established order "back home."

The two married in 1961, when Ann was just 18; Barack Jr. was born later that year. But Barack Sr. had lofty goals and when he was accepted at Harvard to pursue a Ph.D. in economics, he went without his wife and young son—and he never sent for them. (Years later the future presidential candidate would learn that his father had had another wife, in Kenya.) His parents divorced when Barry, as he was known throughout his childhood, was very young. "I knew him only through the stories that my mother and grandparents told," Obama would recall.

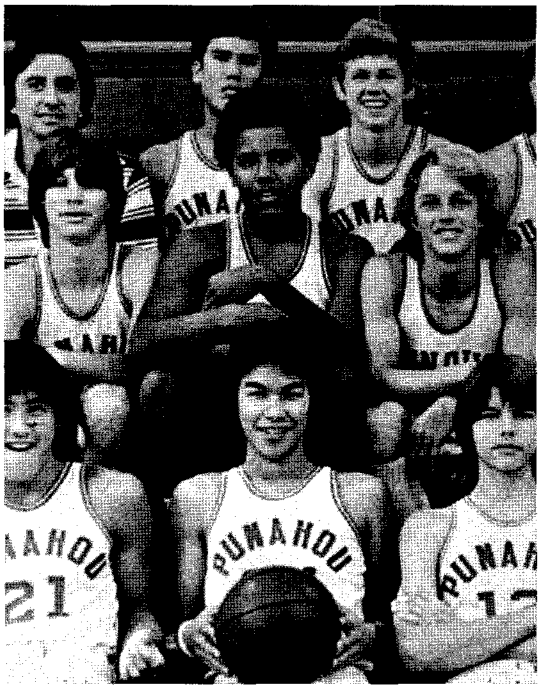


PHOTO / AP IMAGES

His mother sent Barry back to Hawaii, to live with her parents and enroll at Punahou, an elite Honolulu prep school that his grandfather had arranged for him to attend.

Thus began an early life with what the *New York Times* called "A Free-Spirited Wanderer Who Set Obama's Path"—his mother. Even next to John McCain's mobile classroom, Barack Obama's early education was unconventional. "When I think about my mother," Obama told *Time* magazine, "I think that there was a certain combination of being very grounded in who she was, what she believed in. But also a certain recklessness. I think she was always searching for something. She wasn't comfortable seeing her life confined to a certain box." *Time* writer Amanda Ripley concluded, "Obama is his mother's son."

Barry was six when his mother, herself just 24, bundled him up and flew to Jakarta, to join her second husband, Lolo Soetoro, an Indonesian whom she had also met at the University of Hawaii. She had pre-enrolled Barry in a Catholic school, Franciscus Assisi Primary, but Obama says his education began on the drive to their new home: passing "men and women [who] stepped like cranes through the rice paddies, their faces hidden by their wide straw hats. A boy, wet and slick as an otter...on the back of a dumb-faced water buffalo, whipping its haunch with a stick of bamboo...." Their modest stucco house was at the end of a road that "turned from tarmac to gravel to dirt" and included a pet monkey that Soetoro, who was working as a geologist for the army, had bought for Barry as a welcoming gift. There were also chickens, ducks, two birds of paradise, a white cockatoo, two baby crocodiles (in a fenced-off pond), and a big yellow dog behind the house. The first day there, his stepfather bought a chicken from a street vendor who slew it on the spot. "The boy should know where his dinner is coming from," said Soetoro.

Obama attended Franciscus Assisi for two years. He didn't seem to mind that the other children called him "Negro," remembers Bambang Sukoco, a former neighbor. When his stepfather got a better job, with an American oil

What Would They Do for Education?

Both Barack Obama and John McCain have outlined their campaign positions on education. It isn't hard to trace the lines of Obama's thinking back to Ann Dunham. The fact that his mother worked so hard to compensate for "inferior Indonesian schools," writes Shelby Steele in *A Bound Man: Why We Are Excited About Obama and Why He Can't Win*, may have instilled in Obama a belief that "momma...developed the academic skill upon which Obama's successful life was built." In fact, parental involvement is a theme of many of Obama's speeches on education policy. "There is no program and no policy that can substitute for a parent who is involved in their child's education from day one," he told a Manchester, New Hampshire, audience in November 2007. "There is no substitute for a parent who will attend those parent/teacher conferences, make sure their children are in school on time, and help them with their homework after dinner. And I have no doubt that we will still be talking about these problems in the next century if we do not have parents who are willing to turn off the TV once in a while, and put away the video games, and read to their child. Responsibility for our children's education has to start at home."

The high standards are surely the legacy of a mother who woke her son up at four in the morning to study. This legacy helps explain Obama's detailed (15-page) plan for education reform, which includes a "zero to five" program that gives Early Learning Challenge Grants, a quadrupling of Early Head Start spending, and "affordable and high-quality child care" to ease the burden on working families. For K-12 education, he proposes programs to "recruit math and science degree graduates" to teaching and "ensure that all children have access to a strong science curriculum at all grade levels," more funding for "intervention strategies in middle school" for "teaching teams, parent involvement, mentoring, intensive reading and math instruction, and extended learning time"—all to address the "dropout crisis." He wants a new Teacher Service Scholarship program to "cover four years of undergraduate or two years of graduate teacher education" and includes "alternative programs for mid-career recruits in exchange for teaching for at least four years in a high-need field or location."

John McCain is a minimalist by comparison, and, in that sense, may be a product of his free-wheeling childhood schooling. On his web site, McCain offers no detailed plans for reform, but makes it clear that he is a supporter of school choice, home schooling, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). "Public education should be defined as one in which our public support for a child's education follows that child into the school the parent chooses," says his campaign policy statement on education. "No Child Left Behind has focused our attention on the realities of how students perform against a common standard." Asked by *Essence* magazine if fixing NCLB would be a priority, McCain replied, "Absolutely." He will, his campaign web site says, "fight for the ability of all students to have access to all schools of demonstrated excellence, including their own homes."

Obama speaks of "a new era of mutual responsibility," but has little good to say about the era's most formidable accountability tool. "No Child Left Behind has done more to stigmatize and demoralize our students and teachers in struggling schools than it has to marshal the talent and the determination and the resources to turn them around. That's what's wrong with No Child Left Behind, and that's what we must change in a fundamental way."

Though McCain is careful to praise teachers—he called it "an underfunded profession" in an address at his Episcopal High alma mater last April—he does not shy from tough talk about accountability. He advocates merit pay "for the best of them" and encourages those who have "lost their way...to find another line of work." He cites the need to "shake up failed school bureaucracies with competition, empower parents with choice, remove barriers to qualified instructors, attract and reward superior teachers, and have a fair, but sure process to weed out incompetents.... Parents should be able to send their children to the school that best suits their needs just as [wife] Cindy and I have been able to do, whether it is a public, private, or parochial school. The result will not be the demise of the public school system in America, but competition that will help make public schools accountable and as successful as they should be in a country as great and prosperous as ours."

One has to search hard to find mention of "public school choice" in Barack Obama's education plan. But it is there, under the heading, "School-family contracts." These contracts, says the Obama plan, would include "information on tutoring, academic support, and public school choice options for students."

So far, the candidates' beliefs about how best to improve America's schools, though seemingly rooted in personal experience, are also predictable, hewing close to established party lines. However, we have yet to hear a full and open discussion of education policy.

company, the family (Ann gave birth to a daughter in 1970) moved to a nicer neighborhood and Barry was enrolled in a public school.

Ann also enrolled her son in a U.S. correspondence course and "five days a week she came into my room at four in the morning, force-fed me breakfast, and proceeded to teach me my English lessons for three hours before I left for school and she went to work." When he protested, his mother simply said, "This is no picnic for me either, buster."

> **Barack's mother enrolled her son in a U.S. correspondence course and "five days a week she came into my room at four in the morning, force-fed me breakfast, and proceeded to teach me my English lessons."**

Ann Dunham had "confidence in needlepoint virtues," says her son, but was, even in far-away Asia, fully engaged in the issues of the day. "She would come home with books on the civil rights movement, the recordings of Mahalia Jackson, the speeches of Dr. King." She told him stories of black children forced to read books "handed down from wealthier white schools but who went on to become doctors and lawyers and scientists." These stories chastened him about his reluctance to get up at four in the morning.

But there was no *madrassa* school, as a flurry of press reports had it in early 2007. The report was not that farfetched, given the fact that Obama had written in *Dreams* that "In Indonesia, I'd spent two years at a Muslim school" and had "Koranic studies." That may have seemed exotic when Obama wrote about it in 1994, but in a post-9/11 world, attending a "Muslim school" sounded positively traitorous. "Are the American people ready for an elected president who was educated in a Madrassa as a young boy and has not been forthcoming about his Muslim heritage?" asked *Insight* magazine in January 2007. Since the question was attributed to Hillary Clinton's camp, it was fair game for the national media for several news cycles. Eventually, Obama somewhat doused the flames by explaining that in Indonesia, where the majority of people are Muslim, government schools were Muslim, but in demographics only. Obama was Christian and was sent to the government school because his mother and stepfather couldn't afford the private schools.

Then, when Barry was only 10, his mother sent him back to Hawaii, to live with her parents and enroll at Punahou, an elite Honolulu prep school that his grandfather had arranged for him to attend. "This wrenching decision seemed to reflect how much she valued education," writes Ripley in *Time*. His mother would be a peripatetic presence after that, coming and going as she earned a Ph.D. in anthropology and traveled through Southeast Asia for the Ford Foundation.

His grandfather took him to the new school, for his first day of 5th grade, five blocks away. Obama recalls being in a daze that day, treated as an oddity. One girl asked if she could touch his hair (he said No); another student asked if his father ate people. Obama was considered a good student in the college preparatory program. His dad was smart, a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and counseled his son, during a brief visit that first year at Punahou, not to be shy about doing well in school. "It's in the blood, I think," he told his son. Barack stayed with his white grandparents and at Punahou, graduating high school in 1979.

"He was always bright and personable; questioning without being arrogant about it," recalls homeroom teacher Eric Kusunoki. "He was a good devil's advocate."

Classmate Bobby Titcomb recalls, "I could see he was bound for bigger things.... He looked at the world more globally than the rest of us. There was something driven about him."

That could have come from his mother, who sent letters to her son, encouraging him. "It is a shame we have to worry so much about [grade point]," she wrote his senior year, "but you know what the college entrance competition is these days. Did you know that in Thomas Jefferson's day, and right up through the 1930s, anybody who had the price of tuition could go to Harvard? ... I don't see that we are producing many Thomas Jeffersons nowadays. Instead we are producing Richard Nixons." Though McCain and Obama are as different as any two men could be, their early education experiences were remarkably similar in one respect. They both had schooling journeys very different from those of most American children. How their experiences translate into policy will be the sequel that all education policymakers are waiting for.

Peter Meyer, former news editor of Life *magazine, is a freelance writer and contributing editor of* Education Next.

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A Slower Climb

It is well known that teachers earn less than doctors and lawyers. However, few realize that most doctors and lawyers make up much of the gap between their initial and peak earnings by their early 40s, while teachers' earnings rise slowly and peak when they reach their mid-50s and are near retirement.

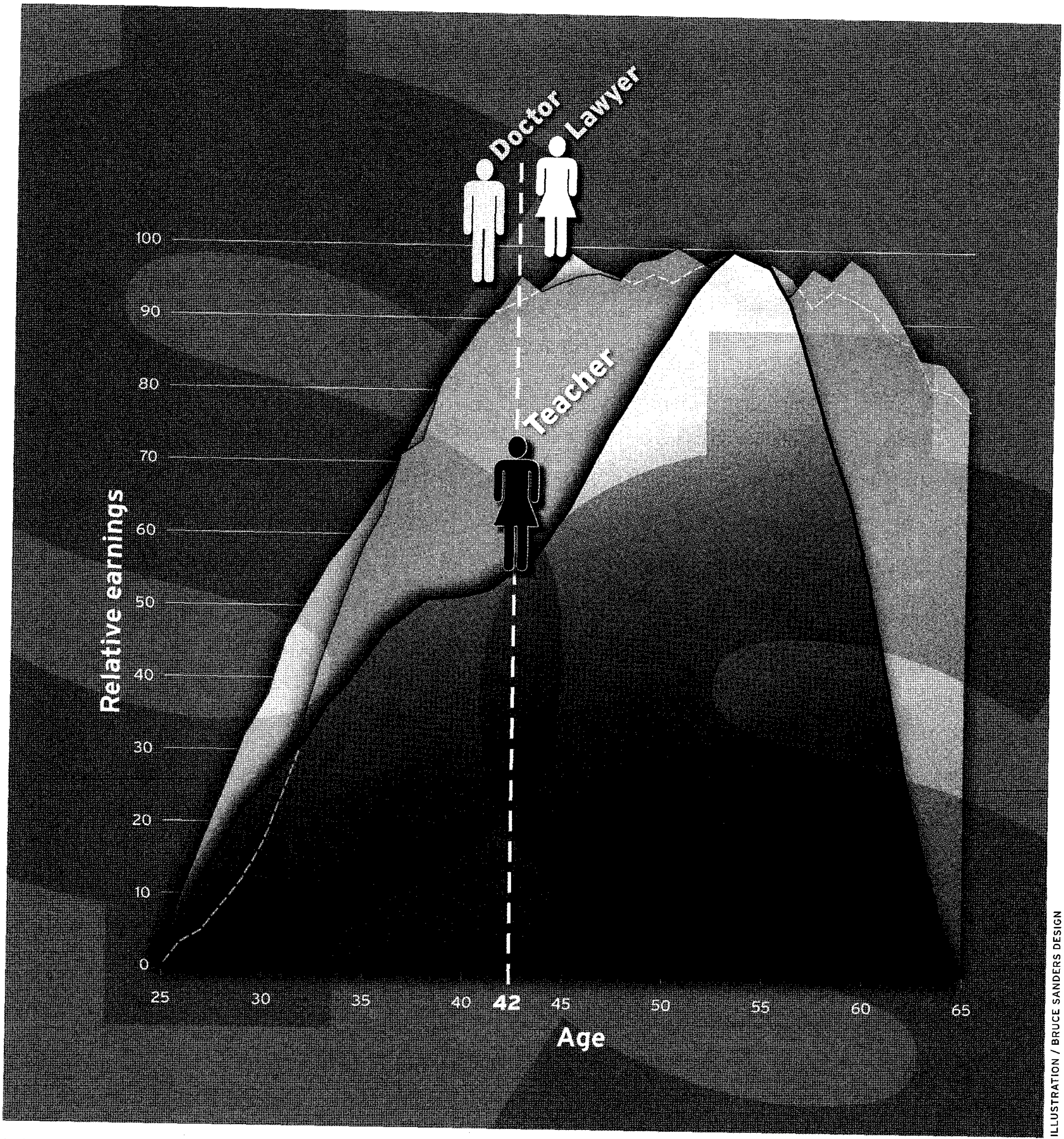

ILLUSTRATION / BRUCE SANDERS DESIGN

Note: The figure plots five-year moving averages of annual earnings,measured relative to the difference between earnings at age 25 and peak earnings for each profession.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006 feature

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How about more pay for new teachers, less for older ones?

BY JACOB VIGDOR

On what basis should we distribute rewards to salespeople? It seems like a silly question, doesn't it? First, "we," meaning the public at large, don't usually get to decide such matters. Second, there are obvious systems of rewards for salespeople already in place, foremost among them the system of commissions, which pays salespersons for the value they directly contribute to a firm's operation.

Replace the word "salespeople" with "teachers," however, and we move from the realm of silly questions to the arena of intense policy debate. Teachers are in most cases public employees. So we do, in theory at least, get to decide how they are paid. The commission model for teachers, variants of which have been proposed for many years, would involve compensating them for the value they provide to their school's operation, that is, the degree to which they educate their students. Unfortunately, the amount of education a student receives in a given year is much harder to quantify than the total sales recorded by a clerk in a store. Measuring student growth has been made somewhat easier by recent advances in the tracking of student performance on standardized tests over time. But the notion of paying teachers on the basis of their ability to improve test scores, often termed "merit pay," while earnestly debated by education policy researchers, is strongly opposed by teachers unions and is a political nonstarter in many parts of the country.

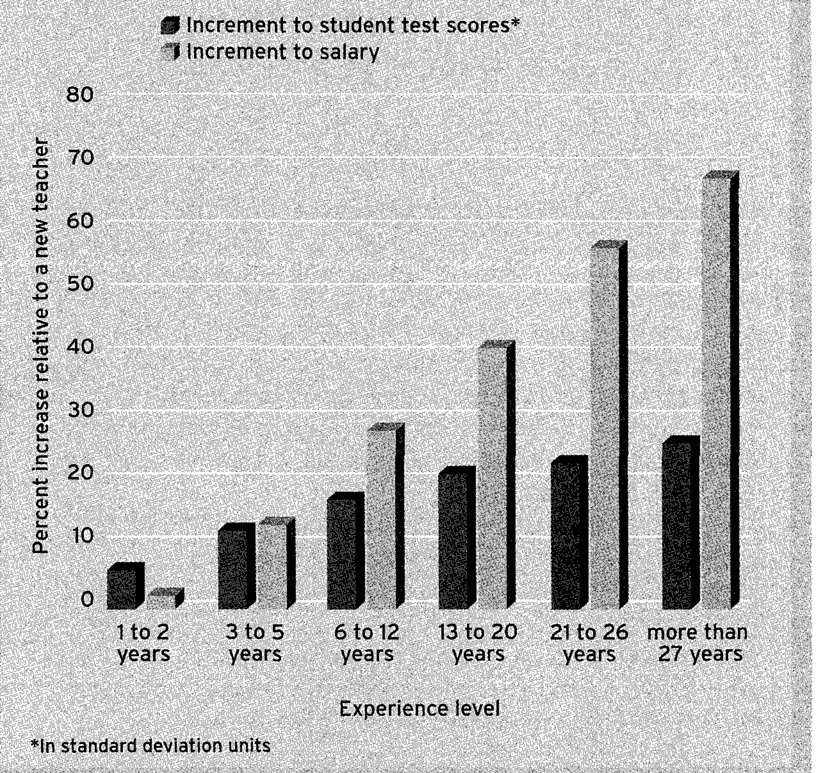
Lost in the debate over merit pay are some interesting, and to some extent disturbing, facts about the way we currently distribute compensation to teachers. Most districts reward teachers for their years of experience, advanced degrees, and in some cases special credentials such

> **Shifting teachers' lifetime compensation toward the beginning of their careers would make the profession more attractive to highly qualified college students.**

as a certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). If every year of experience and every credential were strongly associated with a teacher's ability to educate students, we could feel content that our system rewarded the ability to educate de facto. But the available evidence suggests that the connection between credentials and teaching effectiveness is very weak at best, and the connection between additional years of experience and teaching effectiveness, while substantial in the first few years in the classroom, attenuates over time. Though exact results vary from one study to the next, there is little doubt that credentials and additional years of experience (beyond the first few years) matter far less to teacher effectiveness than they do to teacher compensation as it is currently designed.

Seniority Rules (Figure 1)

In North Carolina, as in most states, teacher salaries increase with years spent teaching, while improvements in teachers' effectiveness as measured by student test-score gains rise initially and then level off.



SOURCES: Salary figures are from North Carolina's statewide schedule, 2007–08, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2007-08schedules.pdf; test-score analysis is from North Carolina statewide high school end-of-course tests, see C. T. Clotfelter, H. F. Ladd, and J. L. Vigdor, "Teacher Credentials and Student Achievement in High School: A Cross-Subject Analysis with Student Fixed Effects," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper #13617 (2007).

What if, rather than proposing a direct pay-for-performance system, we took the intermediate step of stopping the practice of paying rewards for credentials that have no established association with the ability to educate students? A simple case study, based on the teacher workforce in North Carolina, suggests that this policy change would return several dividends. Money currently spent on rewarding teachers for valueless credentials could be used to increase starting salaries, a policy goal espoused by nearly all interested parties, from education reformers to teachers unions. Shifting teachers' lifetime compensation toward the beginning of their careers would make the profession more attractive to highly qualified college students. Finally, the age-earnings profile for teachers would more closely resemble the profile for other professions. Doctors and lawyers reap the full rewards of competence in their profession within 10 years of entrance. Teachers must wait three times that long, even though evidence suggests that they become fully competent in their profession just as quickly.

Pay for Effectiveness

Before we take the next step and introduce the "evidence-based" salary schedule, let's review the basic details of teacher compensation in North Carolina. School finance is relatively centralized in North Carolina, to the extent that there is a statewide teacher salary schedule. Local districts are permitted to supplement the schedule, and almost all of them do. But the state's salary schedule largely determines the rewards paid to teachers across the state. Moreover, the statewide schedule is typical of teacher compensation in most other public school systems nationwide.

On the North Carolina salary schedule, teachers receive rewards for experience, for attaining advanced degrees, and for becoming certified by the NBPTS. A master's degree entitles a teacher to a permanent 10 percent increase in salary. Teachers with doctoral degrees earn a permanent 15 percent differential relative to those with bachelor's degrees. Teachers with NBPTS certification receive a permanent 12 percent boost in salary. Finally, teachers accrue increments to their salary as they gain experience. At the top rung of the experience ladder, teachers with 27 or more years in the classroom earn 68 percent more than starting teachers with equivalent credentials.

Contrast this information with what we know about the relationship between credentials and classroom effectiveness, as measured by student test-score gains. Numerous studies, including several based on North Carolina data, show no significant relationship between advanced degrees and effectiveness, with the possible exception of high school teachers who receive advanced training in their field of specialty. An evidence-based salary schedule, accordingly, would pay no automatic premium for these degrees.

To a large extent, the jury is still out on the importance of NBPTS certification. Studies have shown that teachers nominated for this certification have a legacy of superior classroom performance, but there is less evidence that the process of certification actually improves their performance. Nonetheless, whether NBPTS certification improves teacher quality or merely identifies high-quality teachers, there is some evidence to support a premium for it. How large a premium? We'll return to that question after discussing the returns to experience.

Teachers with more experience are automatically paid more in North Carolina, and in virtually every other public school system in the country. Research has shown that experienced teachers are more effective in the classroom. So the real-world salary schedule looks a lot like the "evidence-based" schedule, right? Not exactly. Consider the evidence in Figure 1. This chart shows two forms of returns to experience. The lighter bars track the returns paid out in the 2007–08 salary schedule, relative to the salary for starting teachers. The darker bars track the returns to experience in terms of teachers' ability to improve test scores, based on a recent analysis of North Carolina secondary schools. The returns to experience are measured by tracking the performance of each individual teacher according to time in the profession.

These two forms of returns to experience look very different. Relative to a teacher just beginning in the profession, teachers with one or two years of experience raise test scores by an extra 5 percent of a standard deviation. They are paid, on average, 2 percent more than starting teachers. If the standard were to pay teachers an extra 1 percent of salary when they raise test scores by 2.5 percent of a standard deviation, then highly experienced teachers who post a 25 percent test-score advantage over rookies should be paid a 10 percent premium. Instead, their premium approaches 70 percent. Visually, the darker bars rise quickly at first, moving from left to right, but largely level off once a teacher has six years of experience. The salary schedule marches right along, providing continuously increasing rewards to teachers as they progress from 6 to 27 years of experience, even though their classroom effectiveness has barely improved.

The existing salary schedule rewards teachers too little for the substantial improvements they post in the first few years on the job, and too much for the later years of their career, when they show only incremental advances. An evidence-based salary schedule would alter this arrangement, focusing the rewards on the early rungs of the experience ladder.

So now we have some basic principles on which to build a better model: Reward characteristics associated with greater effectiveness; do not reward those that have no evidence linking them to effectiveness.

An evidence-based salary schedule would directly reward teachers when they demonstrate evidence of greater effectiveness. Teachers would enroll in advanced degree programs if those programs were known to improve effectiveness.

Looking at Other Professions

Rewarding younger members of a profession for their rapid early gains in expertise is quite common outside of teaching. Consider the age-earnings profile of physicians. The opening figure shows earnings information taken from the American Community Survey of 2006. Young doctors in their late 20s and early 30s are paid relatively low salaries: 30-year-old physicians earn about one-third what their 45-year-old colleagues are being paid. But the ascent of the pay scale is rapid. Within 10 years, the 30-year-old physician can expect to reach the peak of the earnings distribution—a plateau, really, since doctors earn their high maximum salaries for a decade or more.

The picture is quite similar for lawyers. The average earnings of 25-year-old lawyers, fresh from law school, are a fraction of what 45-year-old attorneys are paid, possibly because many of the 25-year-olds are still trying to land a job. The ascent of the pay scale is once again rapid. By the age of 35, the typical young lawyer has attained a level of compensation that can be expected for the next quarter century, with a few years of extra-high earnings in the late 40s.

Contrast these market-driven age-earnings profiles with that of teachers, whose salaries are determined not so much by market forces but by collectively bargained agreements. Whereas the young lawyer can expect to reach peak earnings by age 35, and the young physician by age 40, the opening figure shows that the young teacher must wait until age 55 to attain that professional stature. What is more, the "plateau" in the young doctor or lawyer's future is more of a true peak for teachers. Beyond the age of 55, average teacher earnings fall off rapidly, as many take early retirement once their pensions have vested.

It is true, of course, that the educational profile of the typical young doctor or lawyer is different from that of the typical beginning teacher. Teachers can usually begin work with no more than a bachelor's degree, while doctors and lawyers must complete several more years of very costly specialized training. But the market is telling us something here: across professions, young practitioners spend a few years learning on the job; after this learning period, a 35-year-old practitioner is just as proficient as a 55-year-old. All our evidence suggests the same is true in teaching, yet the teaching profession has not established a pay schedule that reflects this basic fact.

Rational Teacher Pay

Looking at the opening figure, it is not difficult to understand why rates of exit from the teaching profession are high relative to rates in other fields. The 25-year-old teacher is not that much worse off financially than college friends who went into other professions. In addition, the teacher likely has less of a debt burden to bear. By the age of 35, however, the teacher's compensation has declined precipitously relative to that of peers. Most economists would tell you that the teacher should have anticipated such an eventuality. But not every college student plotting out the future behaves as rationally as an economic model would presume.

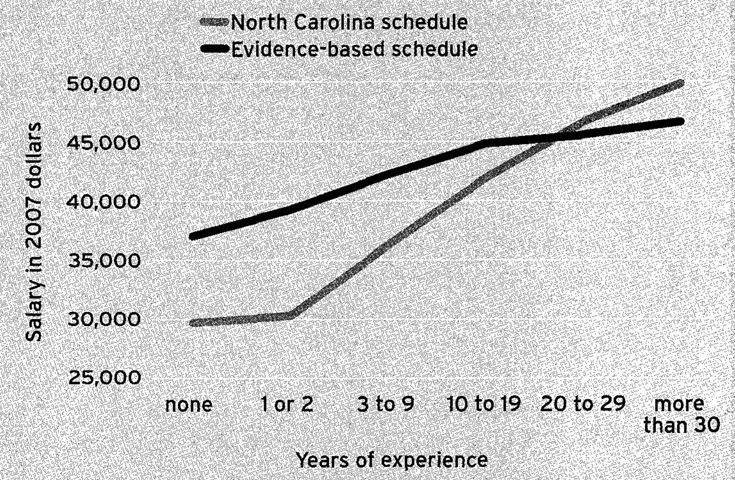
So now we have some basic principles on which to build a better model: Reward characteristics associated with greater effectiveness; do not reward those that have no evidence linking them to effectiveness. To launch the system, all we need to do is pin down the increment of compensation for a given increase in effectiveness. There are several ways to do this, but let's consider just one. Suppose that we reward a characteristic associated with an improvement in test scores of 1 percent of a standard deviation with a 1 percent increase in salary. This would make the height of the lighter bars in Figure 1 match the height of the darker bars. This rule also gives us a perspective to think about what the right increment would be for NBPTS certification. While new evidence could be helpful in determining the exact amount, it's fairly clear that North Carolina's 12 percent increase is larger than what evidence would support. For the purposes of this exercise, let's set the premium at 5 percent. Here's what would happen.

First, we would find ourselves with a fair amount of surplus cash. Although the rewards for the first few years of experience would increase, there would be dramatic decreases in the rewards for more time in the classroom. Eliminating the automatic salary increments for advanced degrees and reducing the premium for NBPTS certification would save still more.

What should be done with this extra money? One straightforward response, consistent with the goals of a wide range of advocates, would be to plow it straight back into teacher salaries, raising the base salary underlying these rewards. Increasing starting salaries in teaching has been advocated by, among others, the National Education Association, the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, New York City schools chancellor Joel Klein, and the authors of a heavily publicized 2007 report by McKinsey & Company on the characteristics of the world's most effective school systems. Using data from the actual characteristics of North Carolina public school teachers, we can simulate just how much of a boost could be applied to starting salaries using the savings associated with the evidence-based salary schedule. As shown in Figure 3, this schedule features a starting salary of $37,000, about 25 percent higher than the current low rung on the salary schedule, which is less than $30,000. As expected, the returns to experience would be concentrated in the first years on the job. After just three years in the classroom, teachers would earn salaries above $40,000. Under the current salary schedule, it takes teachers with bachelor's degrees 13 years to reach that level.

Raising Teacher Pay (Figure 2)

Paying teachers on an evidence-based salary schedule would boost starting salaries and enable teachers to reach their peak earnings at a younger age than they do in the current system.



Note: North Carolina salary schedule is for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and no national board certification.

SOURCES: North Carolina salary data are from North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2007-08schedules.pdf; evidence-based salary schedule is from author's calculations, based on tabulations of teacher degree and experience level, see C. T. Clotfelter, H. F. Ladd, and J. L. Vigdor, "Teacher Credentials and Student Achievement in High School: A Cross-Subject Analysis with Student Fixed Effects," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper #13617 (2007)

Common-sense reforms to teacher pension systems, such as those discussed in *Education Next* by Robert Costrell and Michael Podgursky (see "Peaks, Cliffs, and Valleys," *features*, Winter 2008), would have a similar effect of making the returns to teaching more front-loaded. Under current pension systems, a teacher switching to a different career after five years leaves with virtually nothing in retirement savings. If school systems used modern 401(k)-style defined-contribution plans, early departing teachers could take their retirement savings with them, as many private-sector employees currently do. Old-fashioned pension plans discourage young college graduates not yet committed to a profession from giving teaching a chance.

The proposed salary schedule shown in Figure 2 is constructed to be expenditure-neutral. If we simply switched from one schedule to the other, the budgeted amount for teacher salaries would not change. A conversion to the evidence-based salary schedule could thus be seen as a means of boosting starting teacher salaries without increasing expenditures on education. Granted, the boost to starting salaries is not as great as some advocates would like—the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce has called for starting salaries of $45,000—but remember that this new schedule is based on the arbitrary decision to reward credentials that improve test scores by 1 percent of a standard deviation with a 1 percent boost in salary. A further flattening of the salary schedule would permit a further increase in starting salaries, with no net growth in public expenditure.

Transition Costs

The evidence-based salary schedule is not a win-win proposition; a switch from current schedules would create clear winners and losers. Beginning teachers fare better under the new system. On the current salary schedule, a starting teacher who expects to hold nothing more than a bachelor's degree throughout her career will receive earnings over 30 years worth $620,000 in present value terms, discounting at a 5 percent rate. On the evidence-based salary schedule, this present value increases 11 percent, to $686,000. Even a teacher entering the profession with a master's degree is better off under the evidence-based salary schedule, even though it pays no reward for the advanced degree. This is because the benefit of front-loading the returns to experience outweighs the lost 10 percent salary increment over the long term.

Older teachers would be harmed in a direct switch from the current system to an evidence-based salary schedule. It

Academic institutions that grant advanced degrees to teachers would also suffer under this plan. Without the promise to teachers of a guaranteed salary increment, enrollment in master's-level programs would undoubtedly decrease. Such a shock to the system of advanced teacher education could, however, lead to improvements in program quality.

is too late for these teachers to reap early returns to competence, and depriving them of the present system's rich rewards for advanced degrees and experience beyond the first few years would cut directly into their expected future earnings. Teachers with bachelor's degrees and more than 20 years in the classroom would experience an immediate pay cut. Bachelor's degree–holding teachers with at least 17 years on the job would see a decline in the present value of future earnings, if we assume a 30-year teaching career.

Academic institutions that grant advanced degrees to teachers would also suffer under this plan. Without the promise to teachers of a guaranteed salary increment, enrollment in master's-level programs would undoubtedly decrease. Such a shock to the system of advanced teacher education could, however, lead to improvements in program quality. If postgraduate education makes teachers more effective, they should be rewarded for it. An evidence-based salary schedule would directly reward teachers when they demonstrate evidence of greater effectiveness. Teachers would thus enroll in advanced degree programs of their own accord if those programs were known to improve effectiveness. Alternatively, individual teacher education programs could be accredited on the basis of their demonstrated ability to improve teacher effectiveness. Graduates of accredited programs could then receive guaranteed increments. An ideal evidence-based salary schedule would be flexible in light of new evidence.

Political Reality Check

Given the losses to experienced teachers, and the likely opposition of those in the business of educating teachers, is the evidence-based salary schedule a pie-in-the-sky ideal with no chance of becoming reality? Not necessarily. Entry-level teachers will find it in their best interest to choose the new system, if given a choice. The relative benefits become even more obvious if they intend to stay in the profession only a few years.

Phasing in the system, applying the evidence-based schedule to new teachers while retaining the traditional schedule for those who wish to remain on it, would shift the burden from highly experienced teachers. Of course, this burden would not disappear. It would shift to taxpayers, who would have to finance higher levels of teacher salaries until the completion of the phase-in period, perhaps 20 years or longer. The costs of paying new teachers on the evidence-based schedule while keeping existing teachers on the traditional schedule would peak after 10 years, at which point savings associated with the flattened rewards for experience would begin to outweigh the costs of higher salaries to younger teachers. In North Carolina, the long-run transition costs would amount to about $1.6 billion, half of which would be incurred in the first dozen years after the transition. That's equivalent to a one-time charge of $180 per state resident, or roughly $12 per resident per year if financed over a 30-year period. Relative to the more than $1,000 per capita the state government spends on education each year, this is a modest sum.

There are many other solutions to the three-way negotiation problem among new teachers, experienced teachers, and taxpayers. For example, experienced teachers could be guaranteed their current salaries, plus cost-of-living adjustments, rather than the original raises on the traditional schedule or the salary declines imposed by an evidence-based schedule. The 25 percent increment to starting salaries could also be reduced, or phased in gradually.

Should a family of four be willing to pay an extra $50 per year to finance a move to an evidence-based salary system? Since taxpayers would in the end reap benefits from the move by introducing a system that attracted more qualified teachers with no additional cost after the transition period, most observers would say yes. Taxpayers nationwide pay billions of dollars each year in salary premiums to reward teachers for credentials of highly questionable value. Fifty dollars a year is a small price to pay to reallocate this money in a manner that encourages highly qualified teachers to enter the profession and stay there.

Jacob Vigdor is associate professor of public policy studies and economics at Duke University and a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research.

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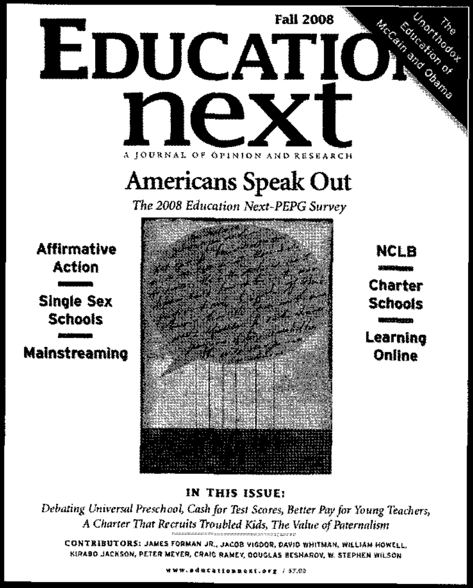
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Debating Universal Preschool, Cash for Test Scores, Better Pay for Young Teachers, A Charter That Recruits Troubled Kids, The Value of Paternalism

CONTRIBUTORS: JAMES FORMAN JR., JACOB VIGDOR, DAVID WHITMAN, WILLIAM HOWELL, KIRABO JACKSON, PETER MEYER, CRAIG RAMEY, DOUGLAS BESHAROV, W. STEPHEN WILSON

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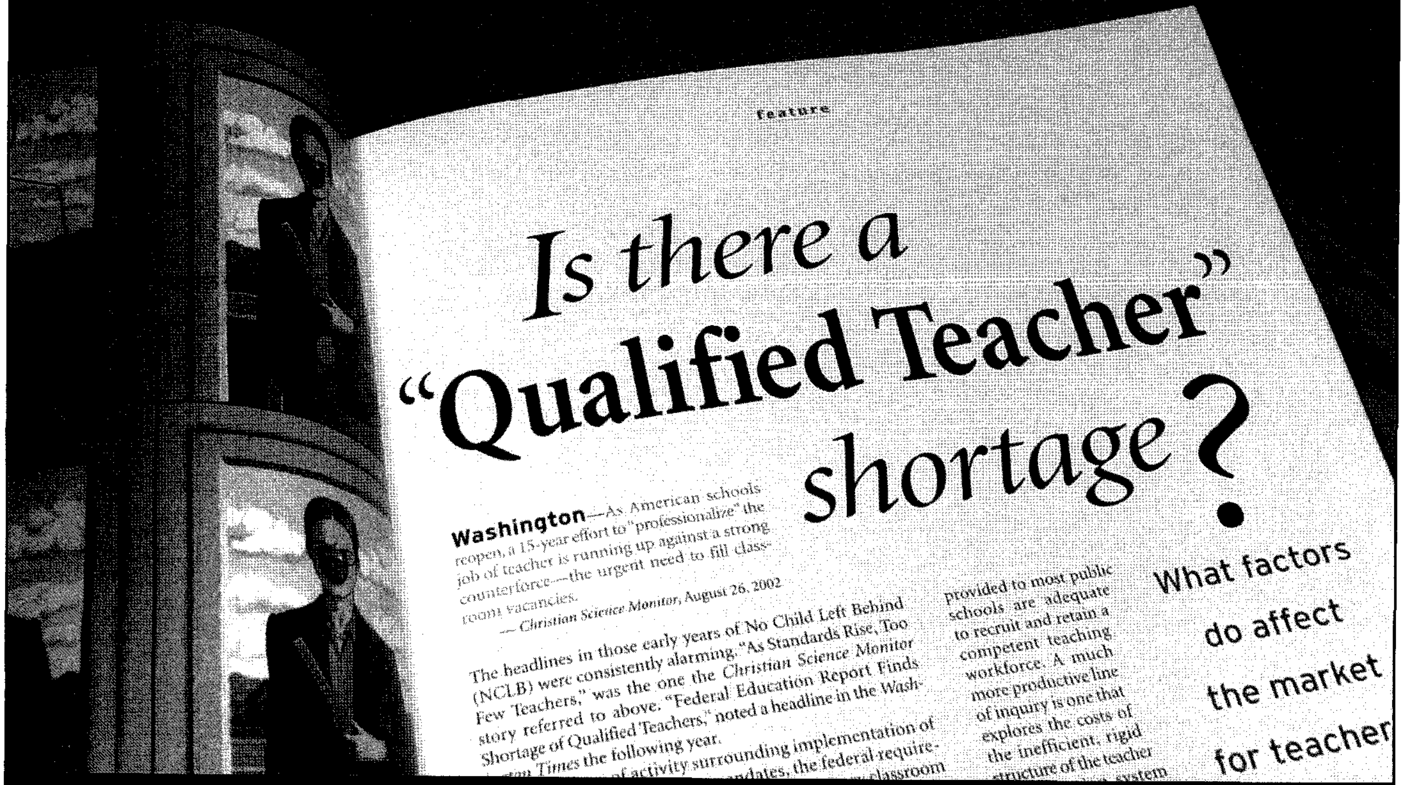
feature

Is there a "Qualified Teacher" shortage?

Washington—As American schools reopen, a 15-year effort to "professionalize" the job of teacher is running up against a strong counterforce—the urgent need to fill classroom vacancies.

— *Christian Science Monitor*, August 26, 2002

The headlines in those early years of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) were consistently alarming. "As Standards Rise, Too Few Teachers," was the one the *Christian Science Monitor* story referred to above. "Federal Education Report Finds Shortage of Qualified Teachers," noted a headline in the Wash- ton *Times* the following year.

of activity surrounding implementation of ndates, the federal require- classroom

provided to most public schools are adequate to recruit and retain a competent teaching workforce. A much more productive line of inquiry is one that explores the costs of the inefficient, rigid structure of the teacher system

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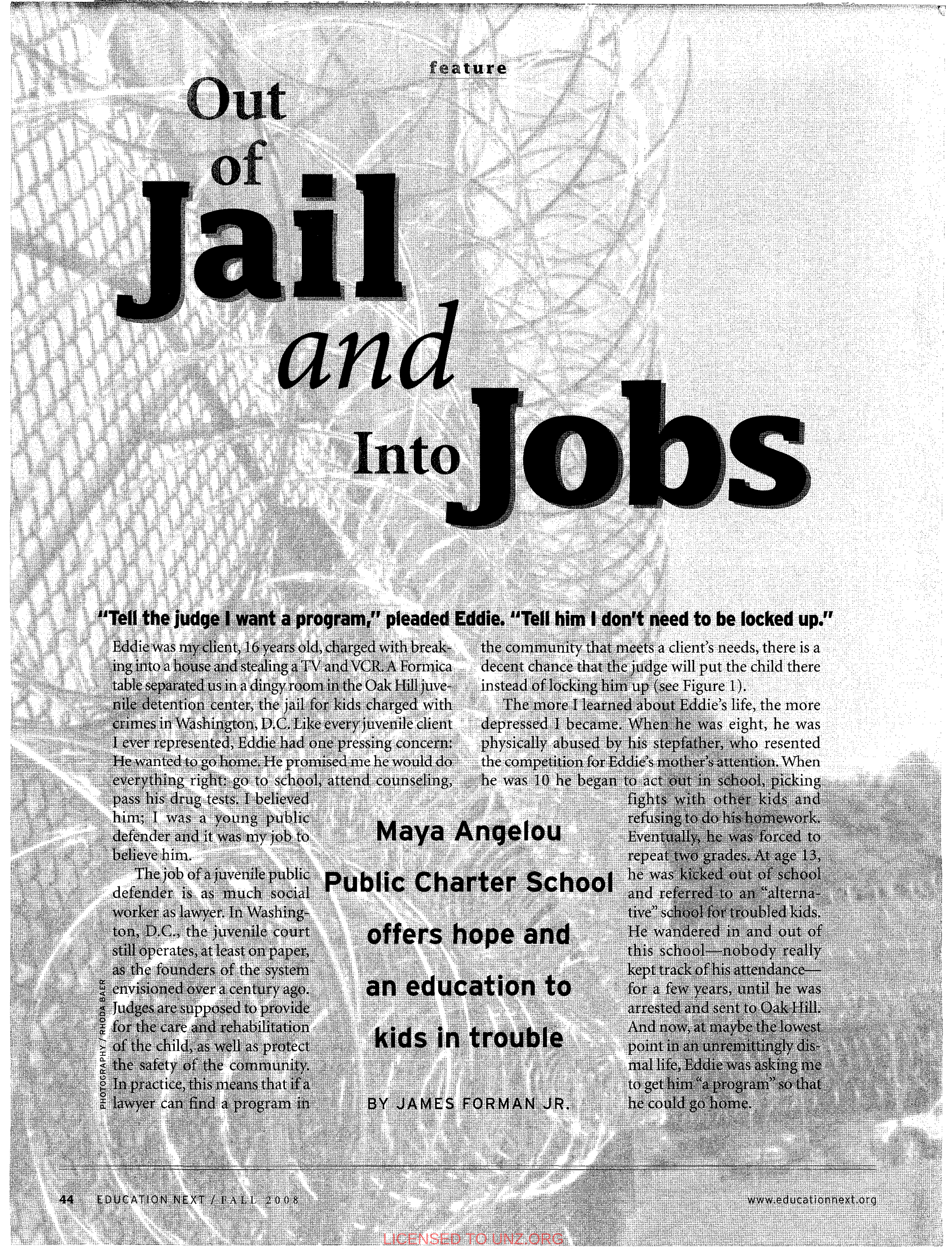


PHOTOGRAPHY / RHODA BAER

feature

Out of Jail and Into Jobs

"Tell the judge I want a program," pleaded Eddie. "Tell him I don't need to be locked up."

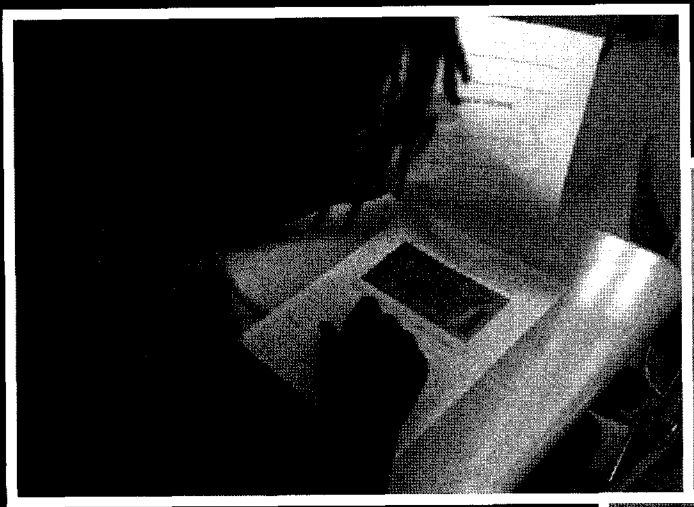
Maya Angelou Public Charter School offers hope and an education to kids in trouble

BY JAMES FORMAN JR.

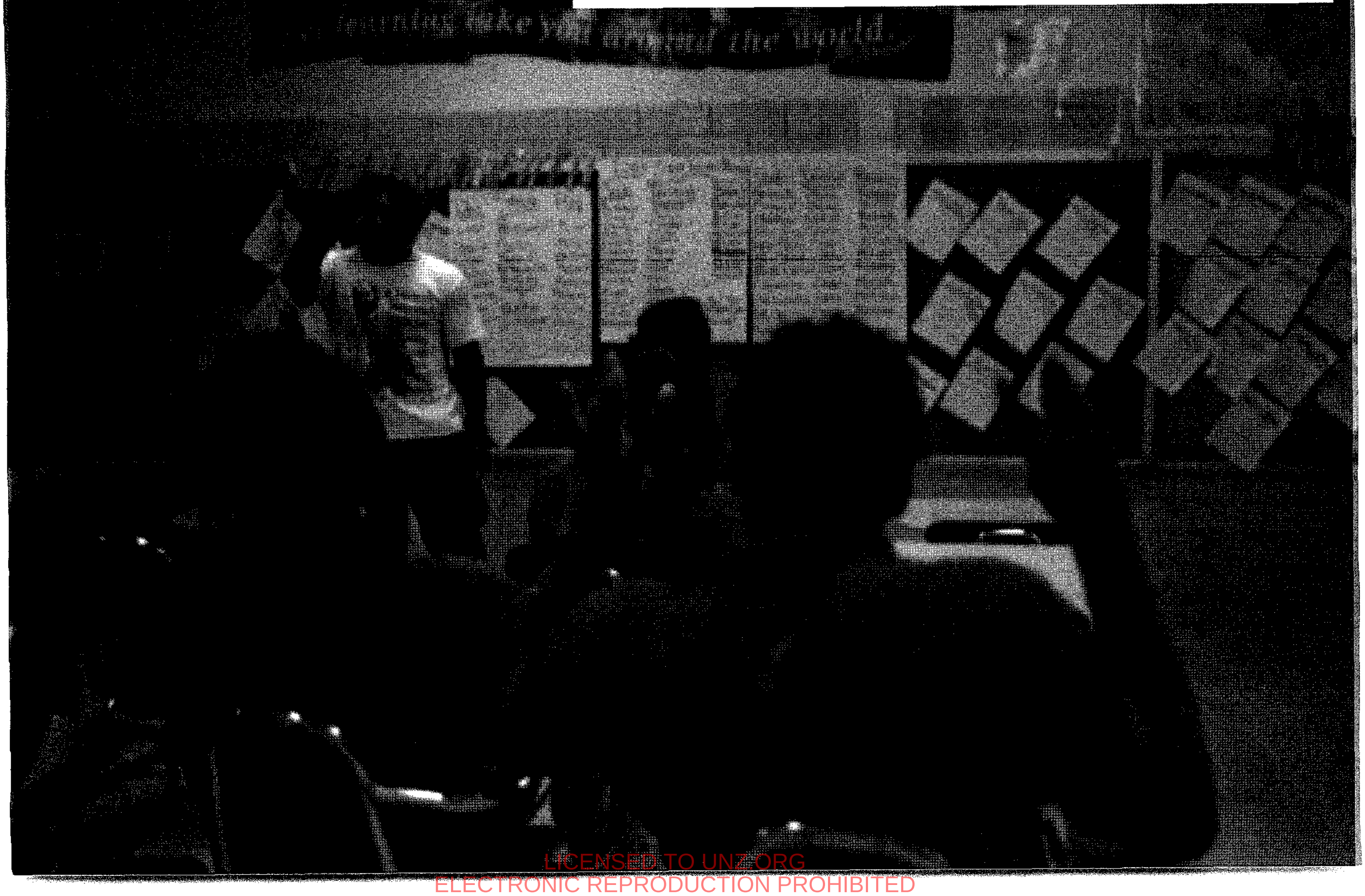
Eddie was my client, 16 years old, charged with breaking into a house and stealing a TV and VCR. A Formica table separated us in a dingy room in the Oak Hill juvenile detention center, the jail for kids charged with crimes in Washington, D.C. Like every juvenile client I ever represented, Eddie had one pressing concern: He wanted to go home. He promised me he would do everything right: go to school, attend counseling, pass his drug tests. I believed him; I was a young public defender and it was my job to believe him.

The job of a juvenile public defender is as much social worker as lawyer. In Washington, D.C., the juvenile court still operates, at least on paper, as the founders of the system envisioned over a century ago. Judges are supposed to provide for the care and rehabilitation of the child, as well as protect the safety of the community. In practice, this means that if a lawyer can find a program in the community that meets a client's needs, there is a decent chance that the judge will put the child there instead of locking him up (see Figure 1).

The more I learned about Eddie's life, the more depressed I became. When he was eight, he was physically abused by his stepfather, who resented the competition for Eddie's mother's attention. When he was 10 he began to act out in school, picking fights with other kids and refusing to do his homework. Eventually, he was forced to repeat two grades. At age 13, he was kicked out of school and referred to an "alternative" school for troubled kids. He wandered in and out of this school—nobody really kept track of his attendance—for a few years, until he was arrested and sent to Oak Hill. And now, at maybe the lowest point in an unremittingly dismal life, Eddie was asking me to get him "a program" so that he could go home.



The curriculum must be rich, robust, and relevant. At Maya, this means selecting themes that are immediately relevant and compelling to students. It means ensuring that lessons focus on essential skills, content, and questions. It means including a combination of direct instruction and project-based, cooperative learning in every class.


learning take you around the world.

As I struggled to respond to Eddie's request, my depression turned to hopelessness. I knew that the city was throwing all kinds of resources into this case. There was money to pay the police who had arrested Eddie, money for the prosecutor who charged him, money for the expert witness who came to court and testified that Eddie's fingerprints were found in the house. There was money to pay me, the public defender. And there would be money for the state—on behalf of we the people—to incarcerate Eddie in a juvenile prison, at a cost of more than $50,000 a year.

Pressure to Fit In
My Dad Used Drugs

Message bricks made by students located at the front door of Oak Hill School

But why was the state only intervening now? Where were we when Eddie was 8 and being abused? When he was 10, couldn't read, and began acting out? When he was 13 and all we had to offer was an alternative school that lacked safety, creativity, and quality teaching?

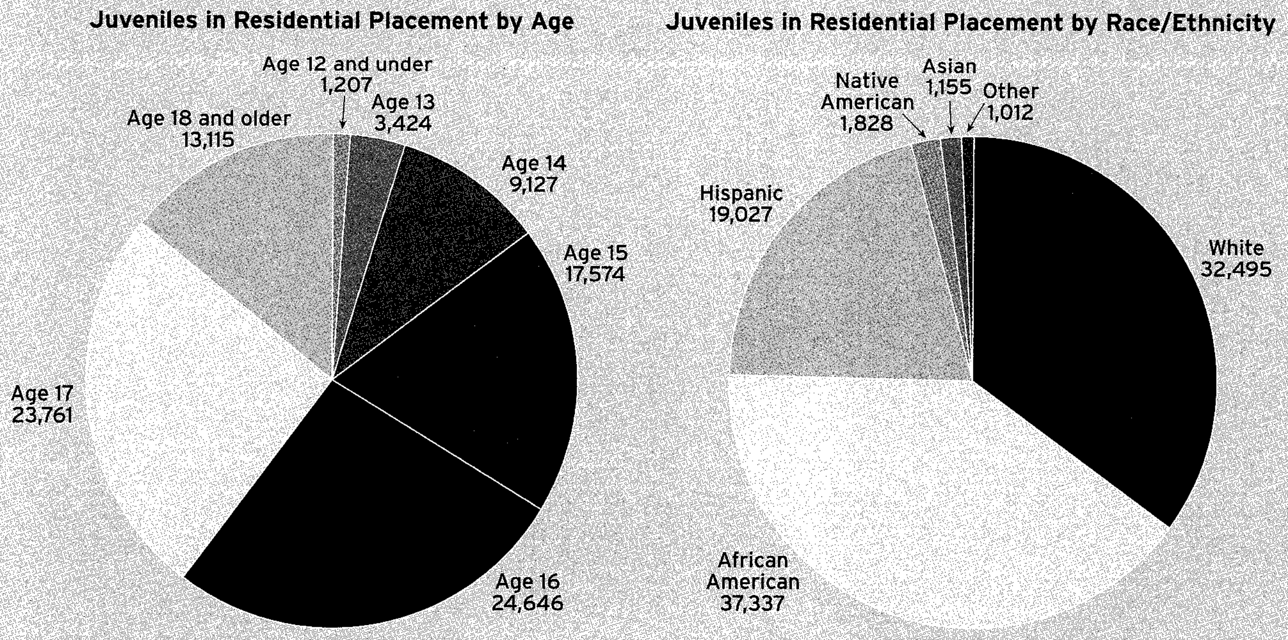
I had been to this so-called alternative school. The auto-body class had no car or car parts, just an outdated textbook. The only trade program with functioning equipment was the "barbering" class, an honorable profession for sure, but hardly suitable preparation for the 21st-century economy. I will never forget the day I went to the school to meet with a teacher and found the class watching a bootleg martial arts video. Interesting videos, the teacher said, were the only way to keep the class "in control and in their seats." Another teacher at the school had told a lawyer in my office that the best time to visit was during class, because "that's when I am free to talk." During class—that was when he was free to talk!

Eddie's court date came. He pleaded guilty and was locked up in juvenile prison.

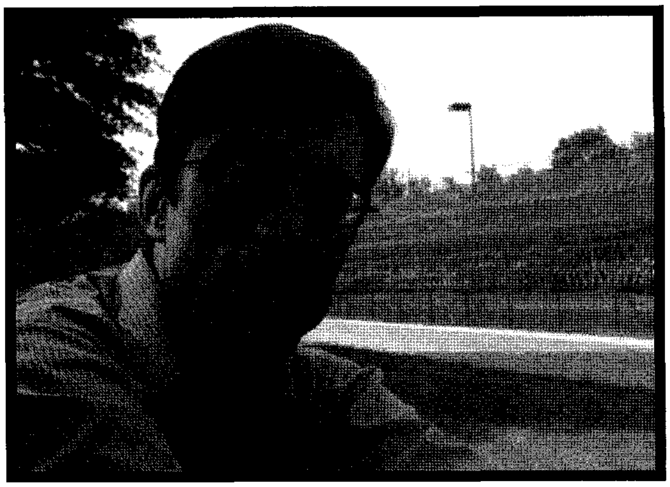
A few months later, I got a call from a friend of a friend. His name was David Domenici, and all I knew about him was that he was the son of a U.S. senator, worked at a corporate law firm, and did a lot with kids. David wondered about the kids who were dropping out of school, who were on the streets, and who were consigned to terrible alternative

American Youth in Detention (Figure 1)

More than 90,000 American youth were incarcerated in 2006. Nearly one-third were under age 16, and more than two-thirds were nonwhite.



SOURCE: Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook, http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/cjrp



David Domenici, See Forever Foundation/Maya Angelou School cofounder and principal of the Oak Hill School

Samantha (Crandal) Simpore, president of Maya Angelou Public Charter School Alumni Association

schools. He wanted to create a school for these kids that would really work. He had two questions: first, did I think that my clients needed such a school, and if so, was I free to meet?

That was the beginning of what would become the Maya Angelou Public Charter School.

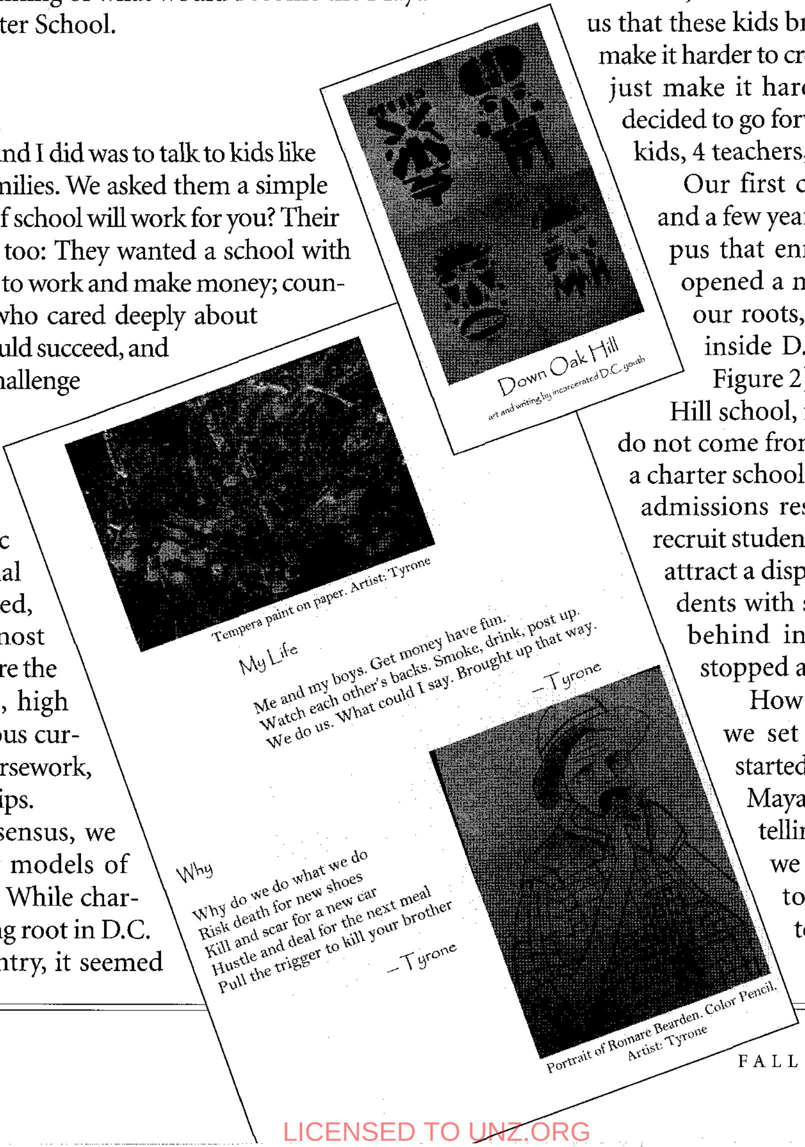
Building a Model

The first thing David and I did was to talk to kids like Eddie and to their families. We asked them a simple question, What kind of school will work for you? Their answers were simple, too: They wanted a school with small classes; a chance to work and make money; counseling; and teachers who cared deeply about them, thought they could succeed, and were willing to both challenge and support them. We also talked to experts—educators, juvenile justice specialists, judges, public defenders, and social workers. What worked, we asked? For the most part, their answers were the same—small classes, high expectations, a rigorous curriculum, relevant coursework, and caring relationships.

Despite this consensus, we could find very few models of successful programs. While charter schools were taking root in D.C. and around the country, it seemed few people were starting charters that would recruit the kids we wanted to serve: kids who were behind in school, who had been suspended or expelled, who had been locked up. For these kids, some said, "It is too late." Others warned us that these kids bring down your test scores, they make it harder to create good behavioral norms, they just make it harder to run a good school. We decided to go forward anyway, with a school of 20 kids, 4 teachers, and a counselor.

Our first campus now has 120 students, and a few years ago we opened a second campus that enrolls 200 students. In 2007 we opened a middle school and, returning to our roots, we have taken over the school inside D.C.'s Oak Hill juvenile jail (see Figure 2). With the exception of the Oak Hill school, most of our students these days do not come from the juvenile justice system. As a charter school, we take all comers and have no admissions restrictions. But we still actively recruit students from the court system, and we attract a disproportionate percentage of students with special needs, students who are behind in school, and those who had stopped attending school.

How do we educate these kids? First, we set high expectations. When we started the See Forever Foundation and Maya Angelou, we made a point of telling kids and families the first time we met them, "This is your first step toward college, your first step toward a job you enjoy, your first step toward the life you want."



Down Oak Hill
art and writing by incarcerated D.C. youth

Tempera paint on paper. Artist: Tyrone

My Life

Me and my boys. Get money have fun.
Watch each other's backs. Smoke, drink, post up.
We do us. What could I say. Brought up that way.

—Tyrone

Why

Why do we do what we do
Risk death for new shoes
Kill and scar for a new car
Hustle and deal for the next meal
Pull the trigger to kill your brother

—Tyrone

Portrait of Romare Bearden. Color Pencil.
Artist: Tyrone

We received a lot of blank looks in response. What we were saying—about college, about the future—was so different from what these kids and families had been hearing, we might as well have been speaking another language.

I do not for a minute want to suggest that maintaining high expectations in an alternative school is easy. The students arrive with a host of challenges. Most of them are years behind academically. Many have disabilities that have never been properly addressed. Yet we face this task with optimism, not despair. Every young person we have ever worked with—including those who have been incarcerated—has tremendous assets. They each have someone in their lives who wants them to go back to school, get jobs, contribute to their families, and even go to college. We believe it is our job to build on the assets each student possesses.

Our second principle is that the curriculum must be rich, robust, and relevant. What does this mean in practice? At Maya, it means selecting themes that are immediately relevant and compelling to students. It means ensuring that lessons focus on essential skills, content, and questions. It means including a combination of direct instruction and project-based, cooperative learning in every class. It means developing a curriculum that features works by contemporary African American authors. And it means operating an extended-day program with enrichment courses, including dance, music, art, speech and debate, peace and nonviolence workshops, digital music production, street law, and yoga.

The final component of our vision is relationships. We believe that caring, trusting, and loving relationships are the key to success. For many of the kids at Maya, school is a place where they are vulnerable, a place where their deficiencies are on display. How do educators break down the walls that kids put up to hide their academic weaknesses?

There are many pieces to the answer, but a critical one is trust. Kids who have experienced years of school failure have to believe that this time the adults will be different. This time the adults in the room won't give up on them, won't just teach the kids who are getting it, and won't write them off as incorrigible.

This is not easy, by any stretch. By the time they are teens, students who have had academic difficulties and a deficit of trusting relationships have perfected a variety of strategies to hide their weaknesses and avoid being abandoned again. They can be diffident, defiant, and rude. They can test you beyond the point you think you should be tested. This remains one of the central struggles in our school.

By the time they are teens, students who have had academic difficulties and a deficit of trusting relationships have perfected a variety of strategies to hide their weaknesses and avoid being abandoned again. They can test you beyond the point you think you should be tested.

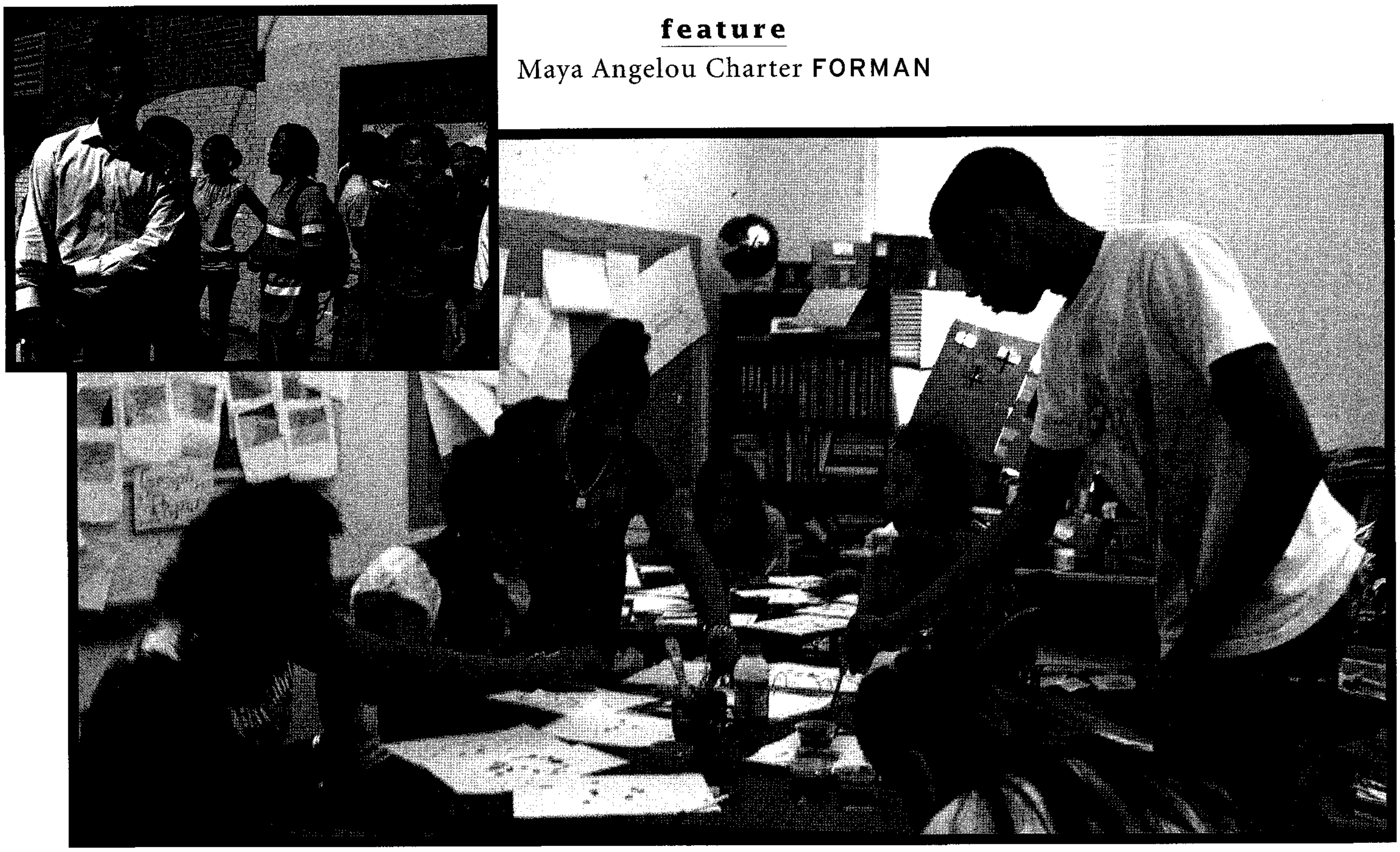
Measuring Success

So how do alternative schools like ours define success? How do we hold ourselves accountable, and how do authorizers hold schools like ours accountable?

I share the concerns raised by many of my friends at the Coalition of Essential Schools that standardized tests do not test many of the things we care about. If you look at our list of school values, you will see we teach many things that have nothing to do with academics. We talk about caring, about empathy, about taking responsibility for each other and the community. We don't have accountability systems to measure whether students become more caring, empathic, or responsible, not because those things don't matter, but because we have not invested sufficiently in the research and development of effective, reliable measurements. We need to do that.

For purposes of this discussion, let's assume that a well-designed test has value. Still, most state assessments are of limited use for a school like Maya Angelou. The majority of our students come to us performing at the elementary school level. When students enter our school as 9th graders, we have only a year and a half to work with them before they take the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System tests (DC-CAS). No one thinks that this is enough time for students to make up deficits of as much as five, six, or seven years.

Moreover, the assessments, at least for now, don't measure a child's academic growth over time, or enable us to compare our students' growth with that of similar cohorts elsewhere. We desperately need assessments that will provide this sort of data. If we admit a 16-year-old who qualifies for free lunch and is reading at the 5th-grade level, we need to know what his growth should be over the course of the year. If my school were in the top



The Maya Angelou Public Charter School was created for students dropping out of school, behind in school, or in inadequate alternative schools. The Shaw Campus, headed by Gene Pinkard (far left) now has 120 students.

10 percent of schools in the country, how much would that student improve? What if my school were just average? These are the essential questions for measuring success.

Suppose that the 16-year-old reading at a 5th-grade level continues to advance half a grade in reading each year. Is that success? What if you knew that at the top 10 percent of schools, similar students advance two whole grades in a year? That sounds more like success. Granted, even at that rate the student won't be proficient in a year. But now you've set the stage for an honest conversation about the goals that the school can and should hold itself accountable for achieving. (As the article goes to press, results have been released from a value-added growth study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research in conjunction with New Leaders for New Schools. One Maya Angelou campus was ranked in the top 5 out of the 20 schools in the cohort for growth gains; the other had too few students for results to be considered statistically valid.)

Tests scores may tell us something about whether a student will graduate from college, get a job, and so on. But if we can measure those things directly, we should.

Let's take a step beyond test scores. At Maya, we have a number of other measures that matter to us. The most important is a longitudinal evaluation of our students' progress after they leave our school. No single piece of data is more important than this one. Test scores may tell us something about whether a student will graduate from college, get a job, and so on. But if we can measure those things directly, we should. This is especially important for alternative schools that, like ours, self-consciously attempt to teach kids resilience.

Right now we are looking at postsecondary participation and completion rates. (We are planning to expand our data collection to include postgraduation employment rates.) We want to know how many of our students are entering and completing four-year colleges, two-year colleges, and high-quality certificate programs. Then we want to compare their postsecondary success rates with those of two cohorts examined in nationwide longitudinal studies: 1) African American students from families earning less than $42,000 a year (National Center for

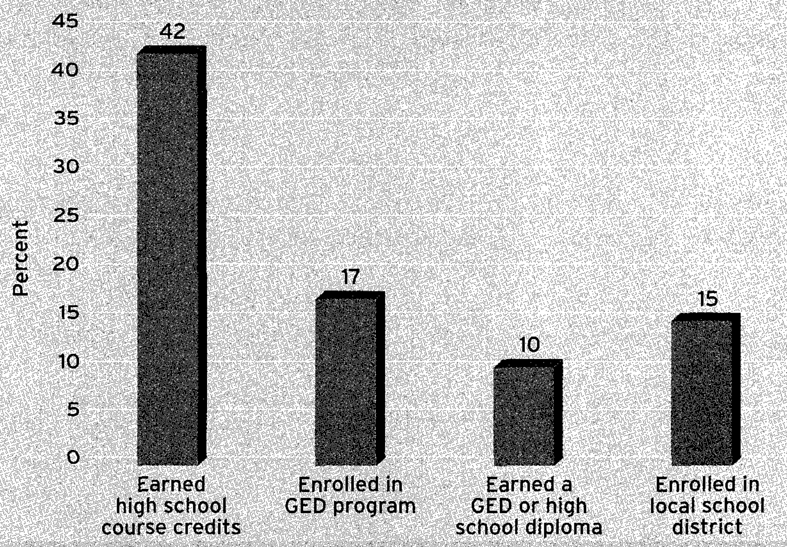
Education Statistics survey); and 2) students attending alternative schools (the Gates Foundation).

Clearly, longitudinal evaluations of this kind have to be, well, long. New research is showing that for low-income students, college degree completion often takes longer than the four to six years that are typically measured. A recent evaluation looked at low-income women at the City University of New York. After 20 years, almost 71 percent of those who entered had earned a degree, and most of those had earned a BA. But 29 percent of those who graduated took 10 years to do it!

Left Behind (Figure 2)

Very few delinquent youth enroll in the local school district while in or shortly after leaving a juvenile corrections or detention program; just over 40 percent earn high school credits.

Academic Outcomes for Students in Juvenile Corrections and Detention (2005-06)



Note: Percentages based on all incarcerated youth, ages 11-21, 16-21, 16-21, and 5-21 for the four outcome categories, respectively.

SOURCE: Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook, http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/cjrp

A host of obstacles—mental health issues, financial troubles, the need to leave school to support family members—can mean that the path to a degree for low-income students is slower than it is for kids with more resources. So we need to take this into consideration when thinking about what benchmarks to set for accountability in this area.

Our students face many risk factors once they leave us—peers who do not always encourage good decisionmaking, bureaucratic educational institutions, employers who do not always treat them well, family members who do not necessarily believe in their ability to succeed, and a society that has too little regard for low-income black teens. In light of this, we know we must help our students develop a host of social and emotional competencies. Our students learn to control (and reflect on) their actions, set goals and develop plans to attain them, delay gratification, and take responsibility for themselves. Things will not always go right for them, but armed with these skills, they will have the resilience to cope with setbacks and to make constructive, ethical choices.

We think this is one of the reasons that our students, despite their academic deficits, outperform their peers after graduation.

Places of Hope

Maya Angelou Public Charter School's success refutes the idea that kids in our target population are too far gone to benefit from any program, however well intentioned, well designed, or well funded. Some of our students have not achieved the gains we hoped for—no question. But we have found that it is impossible to predict which students will make it, and which will fail. In the absence of knowing that, I submit that it is our moral obligation to give all students the best we have to offer.

I know that some funders think that if you have only a dollar you are better off spending it on prenatal care, or early childhood education, or elementary schools. Fair enough. But for the foreseeable future, and maybe forever, our society will have 15-year-olds who have dropped out of school, 17-year-olds who are mothers, 16-year-olds coming out of juvenile prisons. And until the day we do away with mandatory schooling laws, our society will always be running schools for them. The question is, what kind of schools will they be? Will they be places like what D.C. offered my client Eddie, schools with low expectations, dilapidated facilities, and teachers who have given up? Will they be resting stations until we are ready to put the child into an expensive prison? Or will they be places of hope, of learning, of caring? That really is the choice.

My vote is for places of hope. Maya is one. There are others. Not enough, though. We need more.

If you want to know why this matters so much, I offer you the words of Samantha C. Samantha is one of our first graduates. She had this to say in an interview last year:

I was locked up at Oak Hill for a year and a half when I was about 15. There was some schooling there, but what I remember of it was watching movies the whole time. There were no pencils or school supplies at all that I remember.

The way I found my way to Maya Angelou Charter School and See Forever was that David Domenici knew my public defender, so he knew a little bit about my situation and wanted to help me once I got out. He was starting a new school for students like me who had gotten off track. At first the whole idea was denied by the judge. He said I was a menace to society and that I didn't belong in such a school, and it wasn't until David followed through that I was allowed to attend.

One of the first and most important things the school did was to recognize that my household was not ever going to be stable for me. They [See Forever Foundation] opened up a residential home that I was able to live in. They helped me see where different paths might lead, and helped me think through the consequences of different actions. No one had ever provided a blueprint like that for me, to be able to see where I might be headed, for better or for worse, you know what I'm saying?

Another important thing I got from See Forever was my work ethic. They were straight up about it. They'd say things like, "You're really far behind and your dreams are really big, and you're going to have to work to get there, but it's not impossible." They sent me to a precollege exploration course at Wellesley College, to give me a taste of what was possible. But they weren't just talking about schoolwork. My last internship at Maya Angelou was in the human resources department at Marriott, and when I graduated from high school they offered me my first real job.

I've been at Montgomery College on and off for some years now, and I'm considering transferring to Trinity College to finish up. I'm working toward a degree in special education and a teacher's license, because I've seen the good that teachers can do in the world through my own life.

Last year I became the first president of the Maya Angelou Public Charter School Alumni Association. Why? Because the community of support that you build when you're in high school shouldn't just burst when you graduate. See Forever helped support us and still helps support some of us in different ways. The least we can do is try to support each other.

I was recently in our school at Oak Hill. Three students were sitting in the welcome center, which is our orientation space for students who have just been admitted. One young man wasn't participating. I immediately thought of my client Eddie, who could have been sitting in this same seat 10 years ago. Except one thing is different. Now See Forever is running the school at Oak Hill, transforming it from a place of desperation to one of possibility. Now people like Samantha are working there.

You see, Samantha C. is now a teacher and advocate at the Oak Hill school: the formerly incarcerated, special education, supposedly beyond hope menace-to-society Samantha.

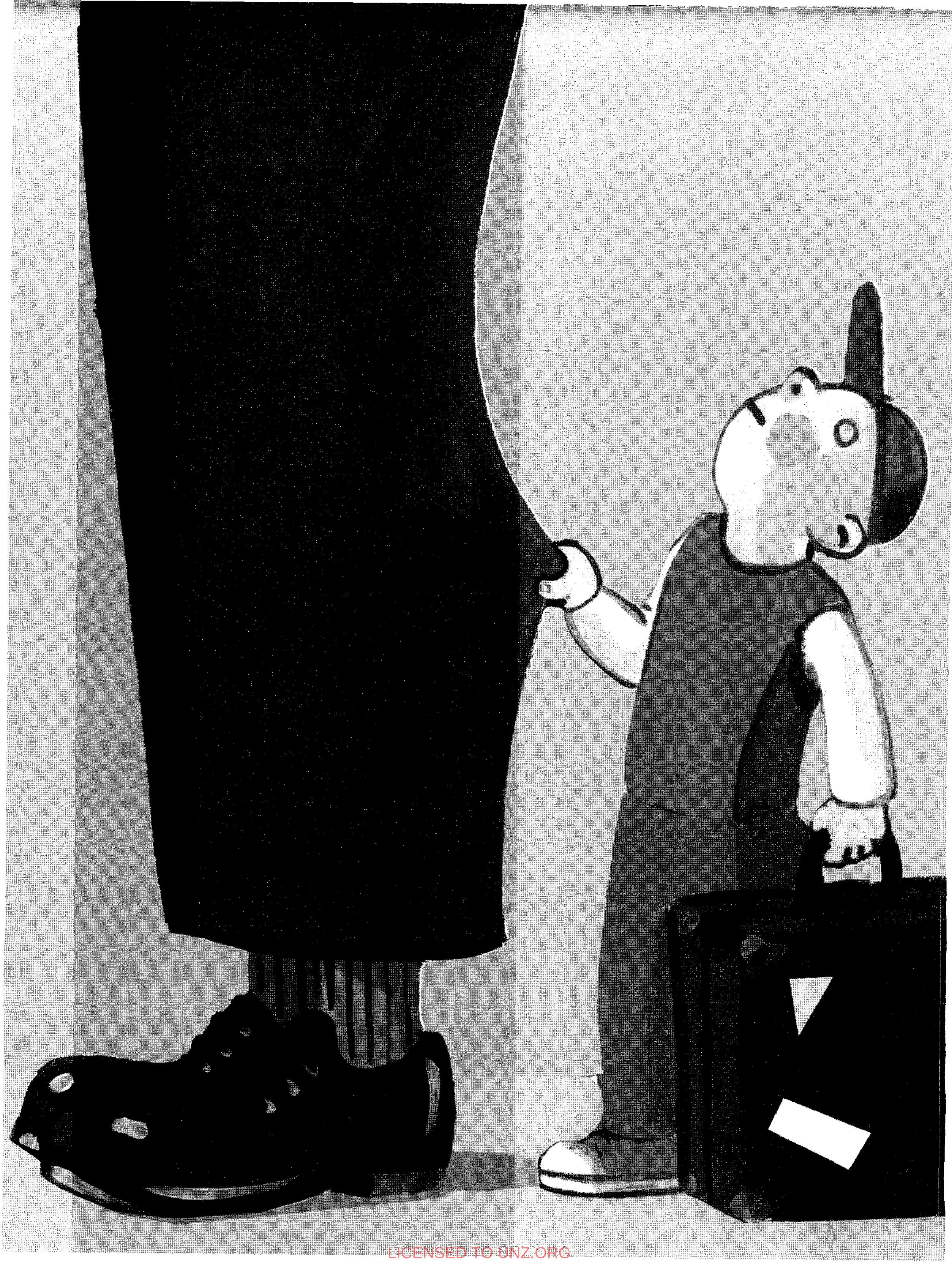
As Samantha sat down next to the young man, he blurted out that he wasn't going to do this, because it didn't matter and nothing was going to change anyway. She leaned in close to him and started talking softly.

I left the room. This was going to work out OK.

SCHOOL
ZONE
NO
LOIT

Our students learn to control (and reflect on) their actions, set goals and develop plans to attain them, delay gratification, and take responsibility for themselves.

James Forman Jr. is the cofounder of the Maya Angelou Public Charter School (www.seeforever.org) and a professor at Georgetown Law School. This article was adapted from a speech given at the annual conference of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers in Savannah, Georgia, in 2007.



An Appeal to Authority

The new paternalism in urban schools

By the time youngsters reach high school in the United States, the achievement gap is immense. The average black 12th grader has the reading and writing skills of a typical white 8th grader and the math skills of a typical white 7th grader. The gap between white and Hispanic students is similar. But some remarkable inner-city schools are showing that the achievement gap can be closed, even at the middle and high school level, if poor minority kids are given the right kind of instruction.

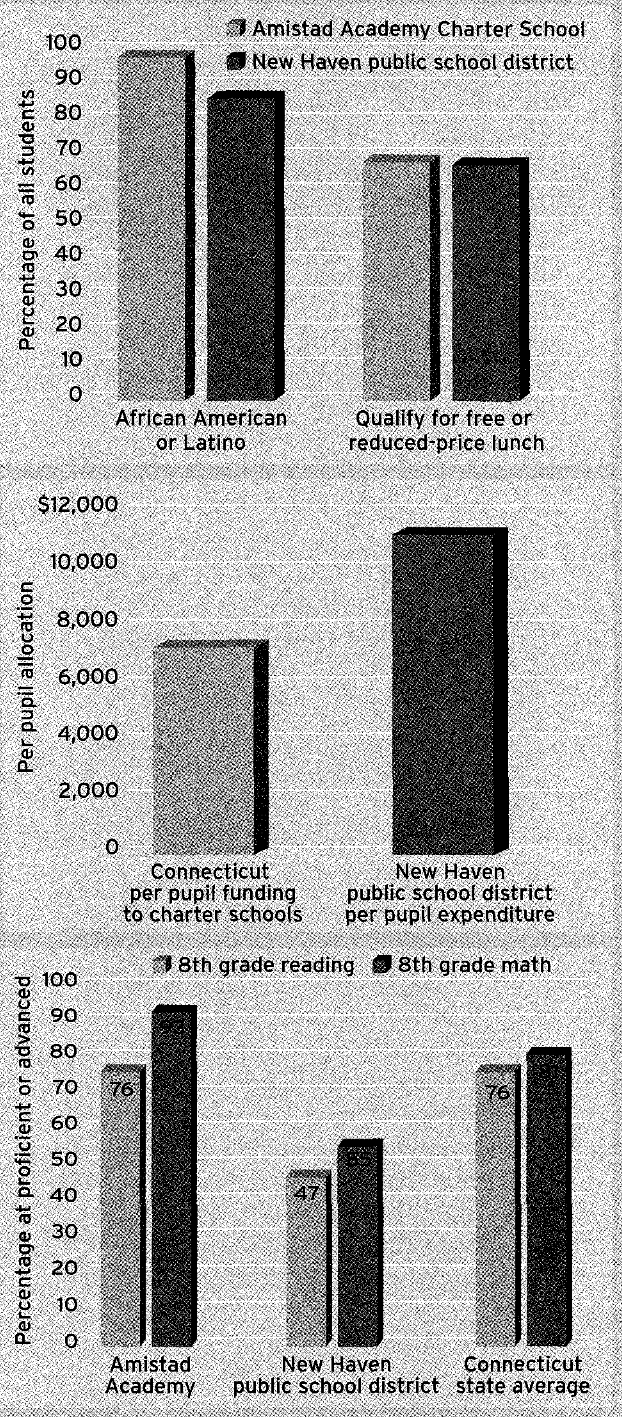
Over the past two years, I have visited six outstanding schools. (For a list of schools, see sidebar, page 55.) All of these educational gems enroll minority youngsters from rough urban neighborhoods with initially poor to mediocre academic skills; all but one are open-admission schools that admit students mostly by lottery. Their middle school students perform as well as their white peers, and in some middle schools, minority students learn at a rate comparable to that of affluent white students in their state's top schools. (For one impressive example, see Figure 1.) At the high school level, low-income minority students are more likely to matriculate to college than their more advantaged peers, with more than 95 percent of graduates gaining admission to college. Not surprisingly, they all have gifted, deeply committed teachers and dedicated, forceful principals. They also have rigorous academic standards, test students frequently, and carefully monitor students' academic performance to assess where students need help. "Accountability," for both teachers and students, is not a loaded code word but a lodestar. Students take a college-prep curriculum and are not tracked into vocational or noncollege-bound classes. Most of the schools have uniforms or a dress code, an extended school day, and three weeks of summer school.

BY DAVID WHITMAN

ILLUSTRATION / ALISON SEIFFER

Challenging Demographics... Less Money...Higher Scores (Figure 1)

Although 98 percent of Amistad's students are minority, two-thirds of them come from low-income families, and the school receives less per-pupil funding than district schools, the charter school's 8th-grade students far outperformed district students in reading and math on Connecticut's Mastery Test in 2006-7.



SOURCES: www.achievementfirst.org; Connecticut State Department of Education, CMT Assessment Data website

Yet above all, these schools share a trait that has been largely ignored by education researchers: They are *paternalistic* institutions. By paternalistic I mean that each of the six schools is a highly prescriptive institution that teaches students not just how to think, but also how to act according to what are commonly termed traditional, middle-class values. These paternalistic schools go beyond just teaching values as abstractions: the schools tell students exactly how they are expected to behave, and their behavior is closely monitored, with real rewards for compliance and penalties for noncompliance. Unlike the often-forbidding paternalistic institutions of the past, these schools are prescriptive yet warm; teachers and principals, who sometimes serve in loco parentis, are both authoritative and caring figures. Teachers laugh with and cajole students, in addition to frequently directing them to stay on task.

The new breed of paternalistic schools appears to be the single most effective way of closing the achievement gap. No other school model or policy reform in urban secondary schools seems to come close to having such a dramatic impact on the performance of inner-city students. Done right, paternalistic schooling provides a novel way to remake inner-city education in the years ahead.

But while these "no excuses" schools have demonstrated remarkable results, the notion of reintroducing paternalism in inner-city schools is deeply at odds with the conventional wisdom of the K–12 education establishment. For a host of reasons, teachers unions, school board members, ed school professors, big-city school administrators, multicultural activists, bilingual educators, and progressive-education proponents do not embrace the idea that what might most help disadvantaged students are highly prescriptive schools that favor traditional instructional methods. And even the many parents who are foursquare in favor of what paternalistic schools do cringe at labeling the schools in those terms. In 2008, "paternalism" remains a dirty word in American culture.

Paternalism Reborn

What is paternalism and why does it have so few friends? Webster's defines paternalism as a principle or system of governing that echoes a father's relationship with his children. Paternalistic policies interfere with the freedom of individuals, and this interference is justified by the argument that the individuals will be better off as a result. Paternalism is controversial because it contains an element of moral arrogance, an assertion of superior competence. But in the last decade, government paternalism has enjoyed a kind of rebirth.

In a 1997 volume titled *The New Paternalism*, New York University professor Lawrence Mead, the leading revisionist, explored the emergence of a new breed of paternalistic policies aimed at reducing poverty, welfare dependency, and other social problems by closely supervising the poor. These paternalistic programs try to curb social problems by imposing behavioral requirements for assistance and then monitoring recipients to ensure compliance. "Misbehavior is not just punished" in paternalistic programs, writes Mead. "It is *preempted* by the oversight of authority figures, much as parents supervise their families." The schools I visited are paternalistic in the very way Mead describes.

Paternalistic programs survive only because they typically enforce values that "clients already believe," Mead notes. But many paternalistic programs remain controversial because they seek to change the lifestyles of the poor, immigrants, and minorities, rather than the lifestyles of middle-class and upper-class families. The paternalistic presumption implicit in the schools is that the poor lack the family and community support, cultural capital, and personal follow-through to live according to the middle-class values that they, too, espouse.

In the narrowest sense, all American schools are paternalistic. "Schooling virtually defines what paternalism means in a democratic society," the political scientist James Q. Wilson has written. Elementary schools often attempt to teach values and enforce rules about how students are to behave and treat others. The truth is that hundreds of parochial and traditional public schools in the inner city are authoritarian institutions with pronounced paternalistic elements. Yet the new paternalistic schools I visited look and feel very different from these more commonplace institutions.

Paternalistic programs survive only because they typically enforce values that "clients already believe." But many paternalistic programs remain controversial because they seek to change the lifestyles of the poor rather than the lifestyles of middle-class and upper-class families.

The most distinctive feature of new paternalistic schools is that they are fixated on curbing disorder. The emphasis springs from an understanding of urban schools that owes much to James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling's well-known "broken windows" theory of crime reduction: the idea that disorder and even *signs* of disorder (e.g., the broken window left unfixed) are the fatal undoing of urban neighborhoods. That is why these schools devote inordinate attention to making sure that shirts are tucked in, bathrooms are kept clean, students speak politely, and trash is picked up.

Paternalistic schools teach character and middle-class virtues like diligence, politeness, cleanliness, and thrift. They impose detentions for tardiness and disruptive behavior in class and forbid pupils from cursing at or talking disrespectfully to teachers. But the new paternalistic schools go further than even strict Catholic schools in prescribing student conduct and minimizing signs of disorder.

Six Effective Urban Schools

American Indian Public Charter School (AIPCS), Oakland, CA
Amistad Academy, New Haven, CT
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Chicago, IL
KIPP Academy, Bronx, NY
SEED School, Washington, DC
University Park Campus School, Worcester, MA

Pupils are typically taught not just to walk rather than run in the hallway—they learn *how* to walk from class to class: silently, with a book in hand. In class, teachers constantly monitor whether students are tracking them with their eyes, whether students nod their heads to show that they listening, and if students have slouched in their seats. Amistad Academy enforces a zero-tolerance policy. Calling out in class, distracting other students, rolling your eyes at a teacher—all rather common occurrences in most middle-school classrooms—result in students being sent to a "time out" desk or losing "scholar dollars" from virtual "paychecks" that can be used to earn special privileges at school.

Teachers ceaselessly monitor student conduct and character development to assess if students are acting respectfully, developing self-discipline, displaying good manners, working hard, and taking responsibility for their actions. The SEED school even requires students to have teachers sign a note after each class assessing how the student performed on a list of 12 "responsible behaviors" and 12 "irresponsible behaviors."

Culture Change

Paternalistic schools are culturally authoritative schools as well. Their pupils learn—and practice—how to shake hands when they are

The most distinctive feature of new paternalistic schools is that they are fixated on curbing disorder. That is why these schools devote inordinate attention to making sure that shirts are tucked in, bathrooms are kept clean, students speak politely, and trash is picked up.

introduced to someone. At SEED and Cristo Rey, students practice sitting down to a formal place setting typical of a restaurant and learn the difference between the dinner fork and the salad fork. The new paternalistic schools thus build up the "cultural capital" of low-income students by taking them to concerts, to Shakespearean plays, on trips to Washington, D.C., and to national parks. They help students find white-collar internships, and teach them how to comport themselves in an office.

One of the distinctive features of Cristo Rey is its novel work-study program, which dispatches students one day a week to clerical jobs in downtown Chicago in accounting firms, banks, insurance companies, law firms, and offices of health-care providers. For the first time in their lives, students are surrounded by white-collar professionals who had to attend college and graduate schools as a prerequisite to landing their jobs.

At the same time that these schools reinforce middle-class mores, they also steadfastly suppress all aspects of street culture. Street slang, the use of the "n-word," and cursing are typically barred not only in the classroom but in hallways and lunchrooms as well. Merely fraternizing with gang members can lead to expulsion. If students so much as doodle gang graffiti on a notebook or a piece of paper at Cristo Rey, they are suspended. And if they doodle a gang symbol a second time, principal Pat Garrity expels them. The school day and year are extended in part to boost academic achievement, but also to keep kids off the street and out of homes with few academic supports.

The prescriptive rigor and accountability of paternalistic schools extend not just to student character and conduct but to academics as well. AIPCS is one of only two middle schools in Oakland to require every 8th grader—including special ed students—to take algebra I. All KIPP Academy 8th graders complete a two-year high-school-level algebra I course and take the New York State Math A Regents exam, a high school exit exam. In 2006, an astonishing 85 percent passed it.

Paternalistic schools, in short, push *all* students to perform to high standards. They spell out exactly what their pupils are supposed to learn and then ride herd on them until they master it. From the first day students walk through the door, their principal and teachers envelop them in a college-going ethos, with the goal that 100 percent of students will be admitted into college. Over time, paternalistic schools create a culture of achievement that is the antithesis of street culture.

By their very nature, the new paternalistic schools for teens tend to displace a piece of parents' traditional role in transmitting values. Most of the schools are founded on the premise that minority parents want to do the right thing but often don't have the time or resources to keep their children from being dragged down by an unhealthy street culture. But the schools do not presume that boosting parental participation is the key to narrowing the achievement gap. Parents' chief role at no-excuses schools is helping to steer their children through the door—paternalistic schools are typically schools of choice—and then ensuring that their children get to school on time.

Principals and teachers at these schools are surprisingly familiar with students' personal lives. As a result, students call on teachers and principals for advice and help. Teachers are deeply devoted to their students, often answering phone queries from students late into the night, showing up before school starts to help a struggling pupil, or staying late to help tutor. A KIPP student recalls, "I needed help in math in 5th grade and called my teacher one week three times a night." It is not uncommon for students to describe their schools as a "second home."

What really makes this a kinder, gentler form of paternalism is that parents, typically single mothers, choose to send their children to these inner-city schools—but they are also acting under duress. They believe their neighborhood schools fail to educate students and are breeding grounds for gang strife and drugs. They are often desperate for alternatives, and are particularly excited to find a no-nonsense public school committed to readying their children for college. In this sense, paternalistic schools draw a self-selected student population. Even so, there is surprisingly little evidence that these schools are "creaming" the best and brightest minority students. At most of these schools, students are typically one to two grade levels behind their age-level peers when they arrive.

The Old Educational Paternalism

Twice before in U.S. history paternalism has held sway in schools for low-income or minority students—with very different results. The first major expansion of paternalistic schooling was the Indian boarding schools of the late 19th century, which sought to "civilize" Native Americans. The second major expansion took place when urban schools sought to acculturate the multitudes of European immigrants to American society.

From the start, Indian boarding schools proved controversial and unpopular with many parents. Agents from the Bureau of Indian Affairs rounded up Indian children—often against their parents' will—to attend the schools. Upon their arrival, children's hair was cut, Native American garb was replaced with school uniforms, and teachers forbade students to speak in their native tongue, often punishing students who failed to speak in English. Students with exotic or hard-to-pronounce Indian names were abruptly given Anglo surnames. Unlike the paternalistic schools of today, which seek to boost existing values among beleaguered single-parent families, Indian boarding schools sought to *eradicate* local culture and traditions and destroy the parent-child bond.

A more benevolent paternalism was evident early in the 20th century when urban schools took on the task of acculturating millions of Italian, Irish, and Polish immigrant children. Schools tried to "Americanize" impoverished immigrants by teaching them English and acclimating them to the schedules and expectations of city life. Most teachers and school administrators eagerly embraced the role of cultural evangelist. Teachers inspected children's heads for lice and lectured them about hygiene and nutrition. Students were taught how to speak proper English; Anglicizing of names was common.

The ethos of Americanization was powerful, even within many immigrant slums. Time and again, when cities provided foreign-language instruction, immigrants declined to enroll in classes taught in their native tongue. Schools for immigrant children reinforced values that parents held but alone could not pass on to their children—namely, the desire that their children learn English and become Americans. On the whole, historians have judged the relatively rapid Americanization of millions of poor newcomers to be a qualified success.

In the latter half of the 20th century, paternalistic education largely disappeared from inner-city schools in the United States. For a quarter century after the controversial 1965 Moynihan report on "The Negro Family," urban school administrators abided by an unwritten gag rule that barred candid discussion of the impact of ethnic culture and family values on academic performance. A core premise of paternalistic schools—that they can transport students out of poor communities by providing a sustained injection of middle-class values—became politically taboo. Decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court reinforced this trend beginning in the 1970s. By advancing the notion that students have the right to free speech and the right to due-process protections if they are to be suspended or expelled, the Court made it more difficult for principals and teachers to play a morally authoritative role.

Scaling Up

As Lawrence Mead has pointed out, paternalism is neither conservative nor liberal per se; in some eras of American history, liberals have pressed for paternalistic programs, while at other times conservatives have lobbied for them. At first glance, the character training and rituals of these paternalistic schools give them a decidedly traditional feel. The schools teach old-fashioned virtues, simply put. Yet these virtues—perseverance, discipline, politeness—are really the same as the "noncognitive skills" that liberal education reformers like Richard Rothstein and economists like James Heckman want inner-city schools to boost in order to raise academic achievement and compensate for low-income students' economic and cultural deficits.

In fact, the founders of many of today's paternalistic schools are liberals who believe that closing the pernicious achievement gulf between white and minority students is the central civil-rights issue of our century. Most of the founders and principals of the schools I visited were uneasy with having their schools described as paternalistic. "I don't think there is a positive way to say a school is paternalistic," Eric Adler, cofounder of the SEED School in Washington, D.C., asserted. Dave Levin, cofounder of the network of KIPP schools, shared Adler's reservations: "To say that a school is paternalistic suggests that we are condescending, rather than serving in the role of additional parents...."

Today's paternalistic schools are more palatable to liberals than earlier models were because their curricula for character development promote not only traditional virtues but also social activism. SEED, for example, explicitly encourages community involvement in progressive causes, as do KIPP Academy, Cristo Rey, and University Park. SEED requires students to participate in community service projects and teaches each student to "make a commitment to a life of social action." Students are urged to reflect on their own experiences with prejudice, discrimination, and bullying.

While liberals applaud these schools for placing poor kids on the path toward college (and out of poverty), conservatives cheer them for teaching the work ethic and traditional virtues. And there is great demand for seats in paternalistic schools among inner-city parents. So why not create lots more of them? Unfortunately, the three legs of the education establishment tripod—teachers unions, the district bureaucracy, and education schools—are all unlikely to embrace key elements that make paternalistic schools work. (See sidebar, for some habits of effective urban schools.)

In paternalistic schools, principals must be able to assemble teams of teachers with a personal commitment to closing the achievement gap, teachers who are willing to work an extended school day and school year, who want to instruct teens about both traditional course matter and character development, and who will make themselves available to students as needed. But requiring teachers to work longer days and years would in most cases violate union contracts. So would allowing principals to handpick teachers (who may or may not be certified) and fire those who are not successful in the classroom. District bureaucrats, meanwhile, are loath to grant individual schools the freedom to do things differently, especially when it comes to curriculum and budget.

Habits of Highly Effective Urban Schools (abridged)

1) Tell students exactly how to behave and tolerate no disorder.
2) Require a rigorous, college-prep curriculum.
3) Assess students regularly, and use the results to target struggling students and improve instruction.
4) Build a collective culture of achievement and college going.
5) Reject the culture of the streets.
6) Extend the school day and/or year.
7) Welcome accountability for teachers and principals and embrace constant reassessment.
8) Use unconventional channels to recruit committed teachers.
9) Don't demand much from parents.
10) Don't waste resources on fancy facilities or technology.

It would appear that education schools (and many K–12 educators trained there) bear a special animosity toward paternalism and its instructional incarnations. This is evident in their dislike of teacher-directed instruction, "drill-and-kill" memorization, rote learning, and direct instructional methods that emphasize the importance of acquiring basic facts and skills.

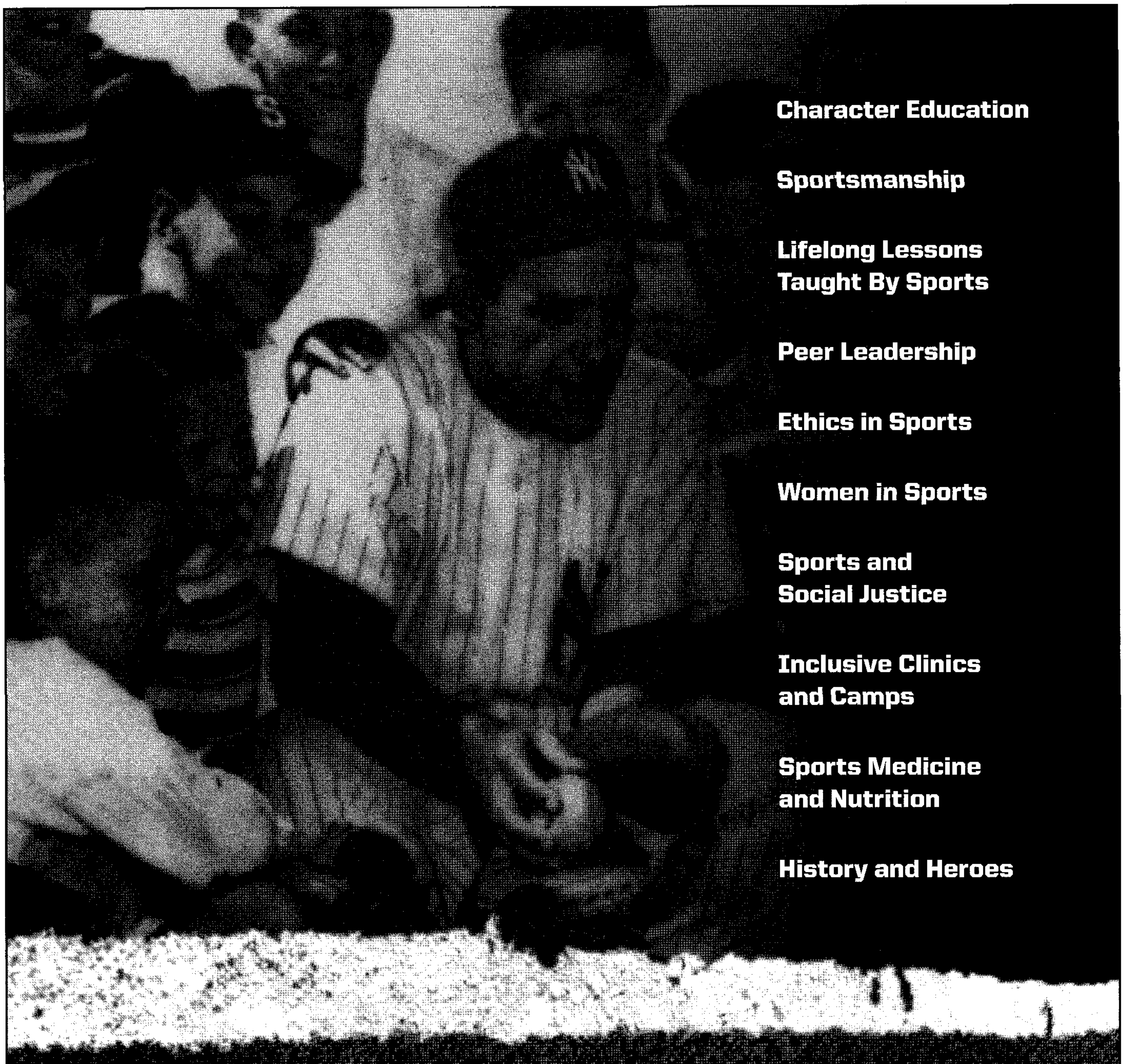
The Romantic educational philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (and his American heir, John Dewey) continues to prevail. Most K–12 educators (and their teachers in ed schools) believe students should be free to explore, to cultivate a love of learning, and to develop their "critical thinking" skills unencumbered by rote learning. By contrast, the new paternalistic schools are animated more by obligation than freedom. Mead argues that "the problem of poverty or underachievement is not that the poor lack freedom. The real problem is that the poor are *too* free." Paternalistic schools assume that disadvantaged students do best when structure and expectations are crystal clear, rather than presuming that kids should learn to figure things out for themselves.

Were it not for the recalcitrance of the education establishment, a grand bargain might be in the offing: If inner-city schools across the nation successfully adopted a no-excuses model, perhaps conservatives would be willing to support spending increases for longer school days, an extended school year, and additional tutoring. And perhaps liberals would be willing to grant principals and teachers of these schools a great deal of autonomy, allowing these schools to circumvent state and district regulations and union contracts.

For now, the spread of paternalistic schooling is taking place on a school-by-school basis in dozens of schools, but not on a massive scale. Unlike earlier generations of exemplary inner-city schools, today's paternalistic institutions fortunately follow replicable school models and do not depend heavily on charismatic principals whose leadership cannot be copied elsewhere. The founders of these schools are devoting substantial resources to replicating their flagship schools, but they continue to encounter obstacles both political and practical. The difficulty of funding an extended school day and year, the reluctance of districts to grant autonomy to innovative school leaders, and the flawed charter laws and union contracts that tie the hands of entrepreneurs are just some of the factors that impede the spread of paternalistic reform. These obstacles make the restructuring of inner-city schools en masse in the mold of paternalism unlikely in the near future.

Still, these entrepreneurial school founders battle on, slowly replicating their institutions across the country. It is too soon to say that all of the copycat schools will succeed. But the early results are extremely encouraging. It is possible that these schools, so radically different from traditional public schools, could one day educate not just several thousand inner-city youngsters but tens or even hundreds of thousands of students in cities across the nation. Done well, paternalistic schooling would constitute a major stride toward reducing the achievement gap and the lingering disgrace of racial inequality in urban America.

David Whitman is a freelance journalist and former senior writer at U.S. News & World Report. *This article was adapted from his forthcoming book,* Sweating the Small Stuff: Inner-City Schools and the New Paternalism *(Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2008).*



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Preschool Puzzle

As state after state expands pre-K schooling, questions remain

Education Next talks to
DOUGLAS BESHAROV
and
CRAIG RAMEY

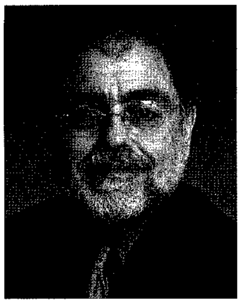
Last year, more than 30 states increased public funding for pre-K education. Advocates Pre-K Now and its congressional allies are pushing for new federal spending and regulations. Some analysts project enormous long-term benefits to participants from publicly funded "universal" pre-K as well as societal benefits and taxpayer savings. Others question their methodologies along with their calculations. In this *Education Next* forum, two of today's leading authorities on early childhood education consider what the research tells us about the effects of preschool, how preschool programs should be designed, and what it all means for public policy.

EDUCATION NEXT: What does the evidence tell us about the effectiveness of early childhood education programs and interventions?

DOUGLAS BESHAROV: The idea that early childhood education "works" stems largely from the widely trumpeted results of two experimental programs operated in the 1960s and 1970s. Both the Perry Preschool Project and later the Abecedarian Project [see Figure 1] reported substantial initial gains in cognitive indicators followed by significant long-term improvements in later school performance, rates of teenage and nonmarital births, and employment and earnings.

Debate continues about the validity of these findings, but there is no denying that these programs operated in a far different social and demographic setting than programs today and that they were "hothouse" programs: Run by top-notch specialists, the programs served fewer than 200 children, cost at least $15,000 per child per year in today's dollars, often involved multiple years of services, had well-trained teachers, and instructed parents on effective child rearing. Significantly, the children they served had low IQs or had parents with low IQs. Since these two pioneering initiatives, no other rigorously evaluated programs have had similar results, despite many efforts to replicate them.

Recent assessments of school-based pre-K programs in Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia indicate that they substantially raise children's



DOUGLAS BESHAROV
Douglas Besharov is director of the Social and Individual Responsibility Project at the American Enterprise Institute and former director of the U.S. Center on Child Abuse and Neglect.

CRAIG RAMEY
Craig Ramey is professor of health studies and psychiatry at Georgetown University and director of the Georgetown Center on Health and Education.

ILLUSTRATION / CRAIG LAROTUNDA

Although some advocates seem to think that early childhood education can begin in infancy, many families —and experts— are worried about having young children spend too much time in nonparental care.
— DB

vocabulary, math, and reading comprehension test scores at the end of one year. This important development points to the promise of such programs, but questions have been raised about the studies. In any event, they have so far only measured immediate or early gains in learning. There is as yet no evidence that these programs will have a lasting impact on the children.

One additional note: American families are divided about how much time young children should spend in child care. Although some advocates seem to think that early childhood education can begin in infancy, many families—and experts—are worried about having young children spend too much time in nonparental care. In this discussion, I assume that the early education is being offered for older preschoolers.

The evidence is quite strong in favor of early education benefits, particularly for children from low-resource families.
— CR

CRAIG RAMEY: The evidence is quite strong in favor of early education benefits, particularly for children from low-resource families. Low-resource families have limited parental education, very low family incomes, and/or parents unable to consistently provide high-quality learning opportunities essential for normal brain and behavioral development. Early education yields results in terms of later academic achievement that are greater and last longer than do educational interventions that begin after failure in school. The Abecedarian Project was not a one-time hothouse program; it was immediately replicated with a new group of similar children (in Project CARE) who demonstrated equal benefits throughout their school years and early adulthood. Next, we adapted this educational intervention for low birth-weight and premature children in the Infant Health and Development Program, conducted in eight cities with 985 participants, and found benefits in all eight cities, with the greatest benefits for children from families with the lowest levels of parent education. The last time these children were assessed, at age 18, they showed continued benefits from their early education. Other rigorously studied interventions include the Milwaukee Project and the Chicago Parent-Child Centers, which served thousands of children in multiple locations and resulted in long-term gains.

Key features of the proven programs that most likely account for the benefits are 1) employing highly competent staff, trained for their positions and then actively supervised; 2) monitoring children's progress; 3) providing educationally focused professional development or in-service training; 4) directly addressing children's needs to become capable in language and cognitive/academic abilities; 5) having adequate, stable facilities and supplies to support the educational, social, and recreational activities; 6) including and respecting parents as natural partners in preparing children for school; and 7) reporting the findings frequently to multiple audiences.

EN: Can we generalize the results from well-designed, generously funded pilot programs to large-scale efforts at the state or national level?

CR: It is a serious misrepresentation to claim that the best evidence for benefits of early childhood programs comes only from "pilot programs" that were extremely expensive. The costs of programs that have produced positive results are in the same ballpark as or lower than those of many already funded public and private programs serving three- and four-year-olds. Two very large, congressionally initiated programs that provided funding levels well in excess of the costs for the so-called "hothouse" programs failed. The first one, the Comprehensive Child Development Program, served poverty-level families and their children throughout the first five years of life, at more than twice the cost of the successful programs. The second, the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Program, served children, families, and schools from kindergarten through 3rd grade, offering comprehensive Head Start–like services to poverty-level families. Despite very high levels of funding, these programs did not produce any measurable benefits to children, families, or communities.

In contrast, results from some of the state and local programs are highly encouraging for low-income children. The Louisiana four-year-old program (known as LA 4) has shown with four successive cohorts of children (totaling more than 15,000 children to date) that

Preschool Primer (Figure 1)

A sample of recent high-quality studies shows that intensive early childhood education programs for disadvantaged students can have a positive impact, but the results for large federal programs are mixed.

L. J. Schweinhart, J. Montie, Z. Xiang, W. S. Barnett, C. R. Belfield, and M. Nores.

Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 40. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005

Summary: *Treatment and control groups were drawn at random in 1962 from 123 low-income African American children ages three and four at high risk of school failure. The intensive preschool program provided to the treatment group paid staff on the public school pay scale and offered an individualized curriculum. Researchers followed both groups through age 40 and found that the program improved social development in childhood, educational attainment, and labor-market success, and reduced criminal behavior. They estimated the return to the general public to be $12.90 per $1 invested.*

Frances A. Campbell, Craig T. Ramey, Elizabeth Pungello, Joseph Sparling, and Shari Miller-Johnson.

Early Childhood Education: Young Adult Outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. Applied Developmental Science 6, 2002

Summary: *The Abecedarian Project was initiated in the 1960s to measure the long-term benefits to high-risk infants of educational intervention within a child-care setting. The 57 children in the treatment group were enrolled at infancy and continued in the program through age 5; the control group consisted of 54 children. At age 21, those in the preschool treatment group scored higher on IQ and achievement tests, had completed more years of education and were more likely to attend a four-year college, were more likely to be employed, and were less likely to experience teenage pregnancy.*

Vivian C. Wong, Thomas D. Cook, W. Steven Barnett, and Kwanghee Jung.

An Effectiveness-based Evaluation of Five State Prekindergarten Programs. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 27, Winter 2008

Summary: *Study used a regression-discontinuity design to estimate effects of state pre-K programs in Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia, all states with relatively high-quality programs. Researchers found positive effects on children's cognitive skills, especially in print awareness and math, though the magnitude of effects varied by state and outcome.*

Michael Puma, Stephen Bell, Ronna Cook, Camilla Heid, and Michael Lopez.

Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, June 2005

Summary: *Study included nearly 5,000 low-income three- and four-year-olds who applied to a nationally representative sample of Head Start programs in fall 2002; children were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Data from 2002-03 indicated small to moderate positive impacts for three-year-old children on several measures, including prereading, prewriting, vocabulary, and parent reports of children's literacy skills. Fewer positive impacts were observed for four-year-olds. No significant impacts for oral comprehension and phonological awareness or early mathematics skills for either age group.*

Russell Jackson, Ann McCoy, Carol Pistorino, Anna Wilkinson, John Burghardt, Melissa Clark, Christine Ross, Peter Schochet, and Paul Swank.

National Evaluation of Early Reading First: Final Report. U.S. Department of Education, 2007

Summary: *Early Reading First provides funding for preschools serving low-income students to offer scientifically based language and literacy development programs. Regression-discontinuity study compared students in funded programs and students in programs that applied for but did not receive funding. Data from 2004-05 indicate a positive impact on children's print and letter knowledge but no impact on their phonological awareness, oral language skills, or socio-emotional skills.*

Robert St. Pierre, Anne Ricciuti, Fumiyo Tao, Cindy Creps, Janet Swartz, Wang Lee, and Amanda Parsad.

Third National Even Start Evaluation: Program Impacts and Implications for Improvement. U.S. Department of Education, 2003

Summary: *Even Start is a family literacy program for disadvantaged children from birth to age seven and their parents. Data collected from 1999 to 2001 as part of an experimental study of 463 families in 18 programs showed that, although treatment-group children and parents scored higher on literacy assessments, their gains were no larger than those made by control-group members.*

a high-quality, full-day pre-K program accelerates children's achievement in math, language, and early literacy skills; reduces grade repetition when they enter public school; and reduces special education placement. The first cohort, now old enough to participate in third-grade testing, scored higher than did other low-income children who did not receive public pre-K. I lament that many of the best-known federally funded grant programs have produced disappointing or no evidence of benefits to children; I judge that this is because too many of these grantees failed to deliver the high-quality programs for which they were funded.

The unavoidable conclusion is that the measured impacts of three national programs—Head Start, Early Head Start, and Even Start—have been tragically "disappointing."
— DB

DB: However one interprets the evaluations of demonstration projects like the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian, the unavoidable conclusion is that the measured impacts of three national programs that seek to implement their approach—Head Start, Early Head Start, and Even Start—have been tragically "disappointing," the word used by most objective observers.

According to repeated evaluations, these three programs do not make a meaningful difference in the lives of disadvantaged children. Here's just one example: After almost a year in Head Start (with an average cost of about $7,700 in 2005), children were able to name only about two more letters than their non–Head Start counterparts, and they did not show any significant gains on much more important measures, such as early math learning, vocabulary, oral comprehension (more indicative of later reading comprehension), motivation to learn, or social competencies, including the ability to interact with peers and teachers.

Separate Purposes, Separate Policies

I read the research literature to say that early education programs can probably make a marked improvement in the lives of disadvantaged children, but that we have only a partial idea of how they should be organized and managed, that is, brought to scale. As of now, there is no actual model of early education or preschool services that has been proven successful in closing the achievement gap, and any additional funding should be used to create a flexible system that can change, and improve, as more knowledge is accumulated.

It is possible that the children from middle-income families might also benefit from preschool programs. The danger is that preschool will become a new middle-class entitlement, displacing the more intensive (and extensive) efforts needed to shrink the achievement gap among severely disadvantaged children. We need separate policies for each purpose, and bundling them together is a sure recipe for a new middle-class benefit that shortchanges the poor.

—Douglas Besharov

EN: Advocates of expanded early childhood education forecast large long-term savings to taxpayers. How are those figures arrived at and do you find those projections to be credible?

DB: The only two rigorously evaluated early childhood education projects with a formal benefit-cost analysis are the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian projects (both performed by Steven Barnett). According to Barnett, for every dollar spent, the Perry Preschool saved taxpayers $7.20 and Abecedarian saved taxpayers $3.78. However, in both analyses, the bulk of accrued taxpayer savings is questionable; in the Perry Preschool analysis, the majority of savings resulted from probably inaccurate calculations in crime reduction. (Barnett uses self-reported arrest data from the children when they were older, but these arrest data seem inconsistent with official convictions data, an indication that the arrest data are inaccurate.) In the Abecedarian analysis, the majority of estimated savings accrued from projected participant earnings, which have no effect on savings to the taxpayer. If these questionable savings are removed from the calculations, according to RAND Corporation researchers the Perry Preschool saved taxpayers about $2.50 for each dollar spent; according to my calculations, Abecedarian saved taxpayers about $.66 for each dollar spent.

William Dickens of the Brookings Institution recently performed a revised benefit-cost analysis for the Pew Charitable Trusts (the leading foundation supporting the expansion of preschool programs). Although he only considered the benefits to taxpayers, his findings are instructive. Even taking the impacts of the two projects at face value, the benefit-cost ratio of an institutionalized Perry Preschool–type program would turn positive only after about 90 years. For Abecedarian, the ratio would turn positive after about 55 years.

Still, we should not use the absence of valid benefit-cost estimates as an argument against early childhood education. How children are raised, including the content and quality of early education and child care, unquestionably shapes their development. The question is not whether some vastly oversimplified benefit-cost claim can be used as a political argument in favor of early childhood education but, rather, how best to improve existing programs so that they are more effective in narrowing the achievement gap.

CR: There have been several different methods used to calculate benefits—and wildly different returns claimed—sometimes as high as $16 returned for $1 invested (definitely not realistic returns for most children and communities) to more conservative estimates of $1.40 returned for $1 invested (far more sustainable and based solely on costs to the public). A similarly high rate of return is unlikely for most current and proposed pre-K programs because many of the children being served have relatively low levels of risk for school failure, placement in special education, later criminal behavior, or failure to become economically self-sufficient in adulthood. The largest benefits claimed economically come from a relatively small study of 123 children in the Perry Preschool Program, where all of the children by age three were performing in the category now labeled developmentally or cognitively delayed (IQ scores below 85 prior to entering the program). This fact is seldom shared in public venues where a community is fighting to obtain support for expanding or improving its supports to vulnerable young children. By overstating the economic return, advocates may be creating unrealistic expectations and ultimately dooming the long-term community support for providing high-quality educational programs to all young children.

The largest short-term savings will be from reduced grade repetition (cut in half in the Abecedarian Program) and special education costs (reduced by 75 percent in the Abecedarian Project). Special education tends to cost double what regular education costs, and special education students today are eligible for free education until the age of 21 (rather than 18).

EN: Are there clear instructional standards that states ought to require providers to adopt? Should we consider a national curriculum for preschool?

CR: A single national curriculum should not be adopted for preschool. Early childhood education programs can succeed only when consistent high levels of instruction are provided in ways that are adapted to the learning and behavioral needs of young children. Young children learn through active engagement and play, not just sitting quietly or passively and receiving teacher-dominated lesson plans. Key evidence-based features of what three- and four-year-old children need to learn to prepare for becoming strong early readers have provided the core for a number of new published curricula, some of which have been rigorously evaluated and reported on; others are now being tested and evaluated. When instructional standards are made explicit, then programs can plan in ways that ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants have the knowledge, skills, and appropriate attitudes to provide high-quality instruction.

DB: It is highly unlikely that any one curriculum will meet the needs of all American children. Various curricula, however, show promise and, more importantly, indicate that much more can be done to prepare disadvantaged children for school. For example, both Project Upgrade (funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and Early Reading First (funded by the Department of Education) used rigorous evaluation techniques and found that *a properly or narrowly focused* early childhood intervention can make a significant improvement in at least some elements of the cognitive development of disadvantaged children. Both programs provide staff with step-by-step, practical guidance about teaching language and literacy to preschoolers.

> *A single national curriculum should not be adopted for preschool. Early childhood education programs can succeed only when consistent high levels of instruction are provided in ways that are adapted to the learning and behavioral needs of young children.*
> *— CR*

Imposing more formal educational qualifications might exclude good teachers who were unable to obtain higher levels of education or are unwilling to make the career investment that licensing entails.
—DB

Congress should mandate a systematic program of research and experimentation, one that tries and evaluates different approaches to see what works best. Most important, making distinctions among children from different family backgrounds and with different degrees of need will be crucial. Those who are most behind almost certainly need a more intensive curriculum.

EN: Should we license early childhood educators? If so, what are the appropriate criteria?

DB: The nature and quality of staff surely matter. The available research, however, is ambiguous at best. Some studies, for example, find that having a preschool teacher with a BA increases math scores; others find no effect on math scores but significant increases in writing scores; and still others find no effects whatsoever. However, the likelihood of selection effects in such studies has led many to question these results. (Better teachers tend to self-select into programs with children from more affluent and better educated families, and that is why the children may do better).

Many have become disenchanted with licensing and specific educational requirements for teaching K–12. Such requirements may not improve child outcomes significantly, and might even compromise them. Imposing more formal educational qualifications might exclude good teachers who were unable to obtain higher levels of education or are unwilling to make the career investment that licensing entails.

The preschool curriculum evaluation studies mentioned above suggest a more promising approach. Project Upgrade had as much impact as the state pre-K programs but, rather than rely on much more expensive public school staff, the program taught the regular child-care staff how to be more effective.

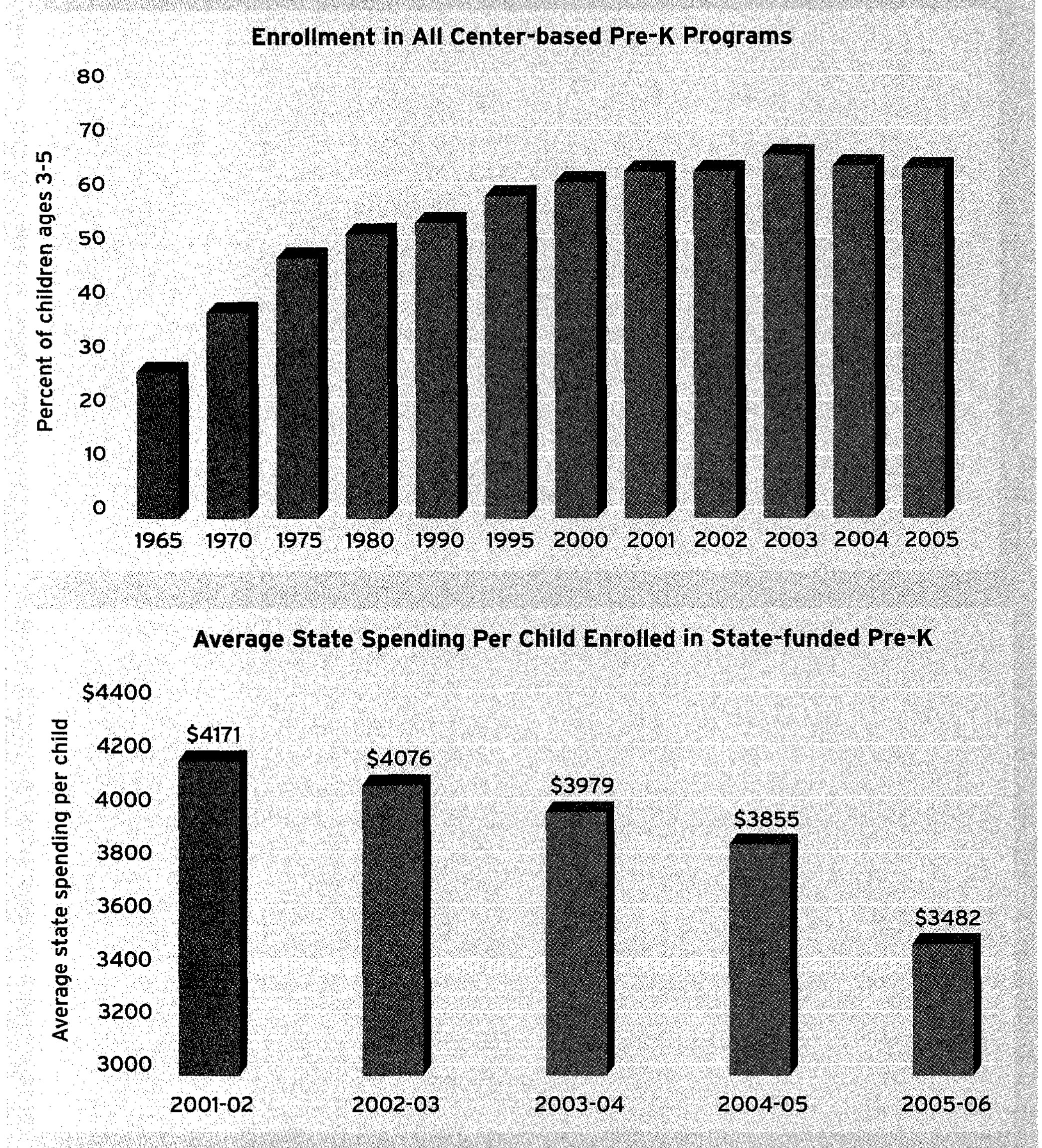
CR: The idea that licensing will help drive up the quality of instruction is a sound one. Licensing would be a major advance if it were grounded in practical demonstration that teachers and teaching assistants have the right set of skills to educate young children, and know how to individualize instruction and interactions with young children who differ in their social and emotional needs, their linguistic needs, and their needs related to specific early academic skills. The traditional ways of preparing teachers for elementary-school education will not suffice to prepare highly skilled educators for children under five years of age. What we urgently need is a thorough review and report about the adequacy of existing college preparation programs that grant associate degrees in early childhood education. Ideally, in the future, the degree-granting programs would work collaboratively with licensing entities in a manner similar to what exists in nursing, clinical psychology, medicine, dentistry, and allied health professions. What should be emphasized is how well teachers instruct in their classrooms, not just their formal education and degrees earned.

EN: What kinds of accountability measures, if any, would you advocate for early childhood education?

CR: The more than a dozen early childhood education programs that produced lasting benefits could point to those results because they held their programs accountable. Following the example these programs set, accountability has been accepted as valuable and been well implemented in a number of large-scale pre-K programs, such as those in Louisiana, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and parts of California. I further want to refute the myth that assessing the progress of individual children is stressful to children (all teachers are expected to monitor and document children's progress already). But I also think that classroom practices should be documented. When classroom instruction is directly observed and feedback is provided in ways that help teachers and teaching assistants improve their classroom practices, children have been shown to increase their gains. How could we not require that each and every program document the instruction and other supports provided, including the quality and consistency of instruction, the amount of time the program is offered, and the progress of the participating children and families?

Pre-K Picture (Figure 2)

Enrollment in center-based pre-K programs increased steadily from the1960s through the 1990s and flattened out after 2000. From 2001 to 2006, average state spending per child dropped by 20 percent.



NOTE: In 2005-06, 38 states funded pre-K programs.

SOURCES: National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; National Institute for Early Education Research, 2006

> *How could we not require that each and every program document the instruction and other supports provided, including the quality and consistency of instruction, the amount of time the program is offered, and the progress of the participating children and families?*
> *— CR*

DB: If we are to believe the repeatedly negative evaluations of Head Start, Early Head Start, and Even Start, these programs have unacceptably small impacts to justify their cost. The political process has begun to recognize their limited effectiveness and to hold them accountable. Presumably because of disappointing evaluations, Head Start's funding has essentially remained flat since 2001, at about $7 billion. Yet, during the 2007 reauthorization of Head Start, nary a word was spoken about its questionable

A Complicated Question

The research funded to study long-term benefits of early educational programs was concentrated on children from highly impoverished families or children who already showed delays or disabilities. To date, the limited evidence about children with lesser risks or children from strong, healthy, well-resourced families indicates that high-quality education (as expected) does not have a strong positive or negative effect. This confirms what the most detailed scientific reviews conclude: children need to have frequent positive learning experiences on a regular basis during the first five years of life. Whether these are provided by parents, natural kinship networks, or paid-for child-care and preschool programs does not matter.

There are important societal and practical issues, however, regarding whether pre-K should be provided free only to families who cannot afford an alternative. These questions include the potential value of having a socially and economically diverse group of children together prior to kindergarten; supporting families with working parents who require full-day care and education for their young children; and where best to serve children with special needs whose early education costs already are fully assumed (regardless of family income) by the public schools (based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]).

—Craig Ramey

It is difficult to see why all pre-K programs—nationwide—should be entrusted to a public system fraught with so many serious shortcomings, especially in the low-income communities most in need of effective early education programs.
—DB

impacts. Most members proclaimed that Head Start "works" or "is highly successful." Worse, Congress eliminated the Head Start National Reporting System, a series of cognitive tests administered twice a year to all Head Start children and designed to be "used in planning training and technical assistance efforts for local programs." Critics argued that the tests focused only on cognitive impacts, that the questions were not age appropriate, and that the process was intentionally designed to prove Head Start was ineffective and therefore should be terminated.

Whether or not these complaints are valid, the accountability system was still in the development stage, and there is now no systematic way to measure the progress of Head Start children through the program. A better route would have been to improve the testing system the way all testing systems are improved: by trial and error, while keeping an open mind.

EN: If the government is to finance early childhood education, how should the funds be distributed: through the school system, by giving tax credits or vouchers to parents, or by some other mechanism?

DB: Up to now, the early childhood education movement has focused on expanding school-based pre-K programs [see Figure 2 for enrollment and state spending trends], with the ultimate goal of "universal pre-K." According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, in 2006 states spent $3.3 billion on pre-K programs, up from $970 million in 1992. As much as 90 percent of these funds go to public schools, with the remainder going to selected center-based child-care providers. It is difficult to see why all pre-K programs—nationwide—should be entrusted to a public system fraught with so many serious shortcomings, especially in the low-income communities most in need of effective early education programs.

When early education funds are given to schools and other agencies to serve a specific neighborhood, parents must either send their child to the local free program or use their own money to pay to use a different one. Hence, they are denied real freedom to select the provider of their choice, or at least to receive government help to pay for their chosen provider.

More troubling, this top-down approach to funding early education programs is a retreat from the unquestionable success of child-care vouchers. Since 1991, the Child Care and Development Fund and other federal programs have provided almost $100 billion in child-care subsidies via state-distributed vouchers—with nary a problem—and low-income parents have had the freedom to choose the particular providers they want, largely without government constraints (even unlicensed providers can be used in most states).

CR: We do not have an adequate scientific basis, thus far, to endorse any single system of funding for early childhood education. I also do not think that programs with little or no benefits should continue to receive funding. The mega–child care subsidies program has funded programs that sometimes are of extremely low quality. Head Start and Early Head Start programs have ambitious goals and reasonable standards, but their actual implementation is far too uneven. These public subsidies for poor quality care must not be tolerated. Accordingly, I favor competitive market-driven approaches alongside publicly funded initiatives, so long as *all* of these are held publicly accountable using the same standards and measures of performance and benefits. Several interesting ideas have scarcely been tried, such as adequately funded vouchers, substantial tax credits, public-private partnership programs, and parent participatory contributions to early childhood programs. We need to support rigorous investigations of alternative strategies for providing young children with the care and education they need to succeed in school and life. There is likely to be plenty of room for having multiple approaches—all of which could be held to the same high quality standards—to help young children and their families.

Douglas M. Call assisted Douglas Besharov in the preparation of his responses.

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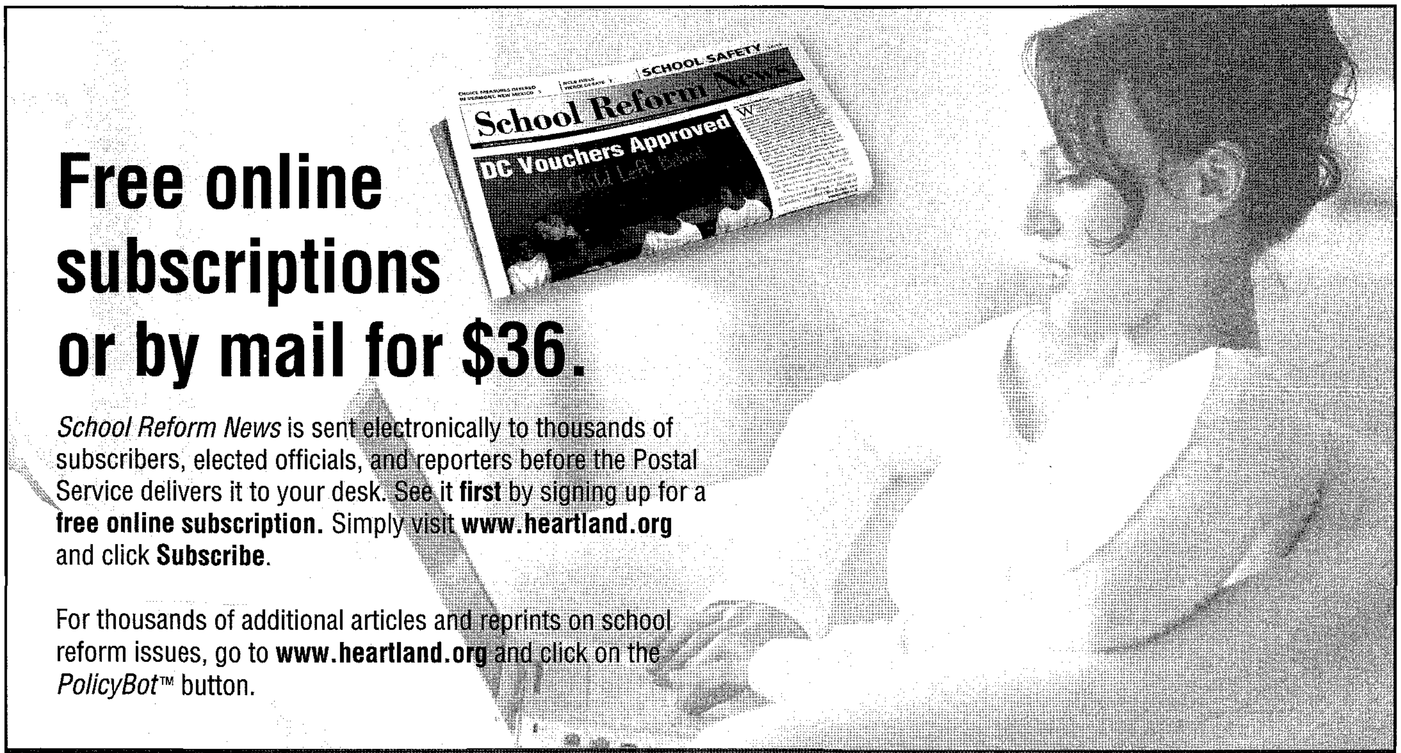

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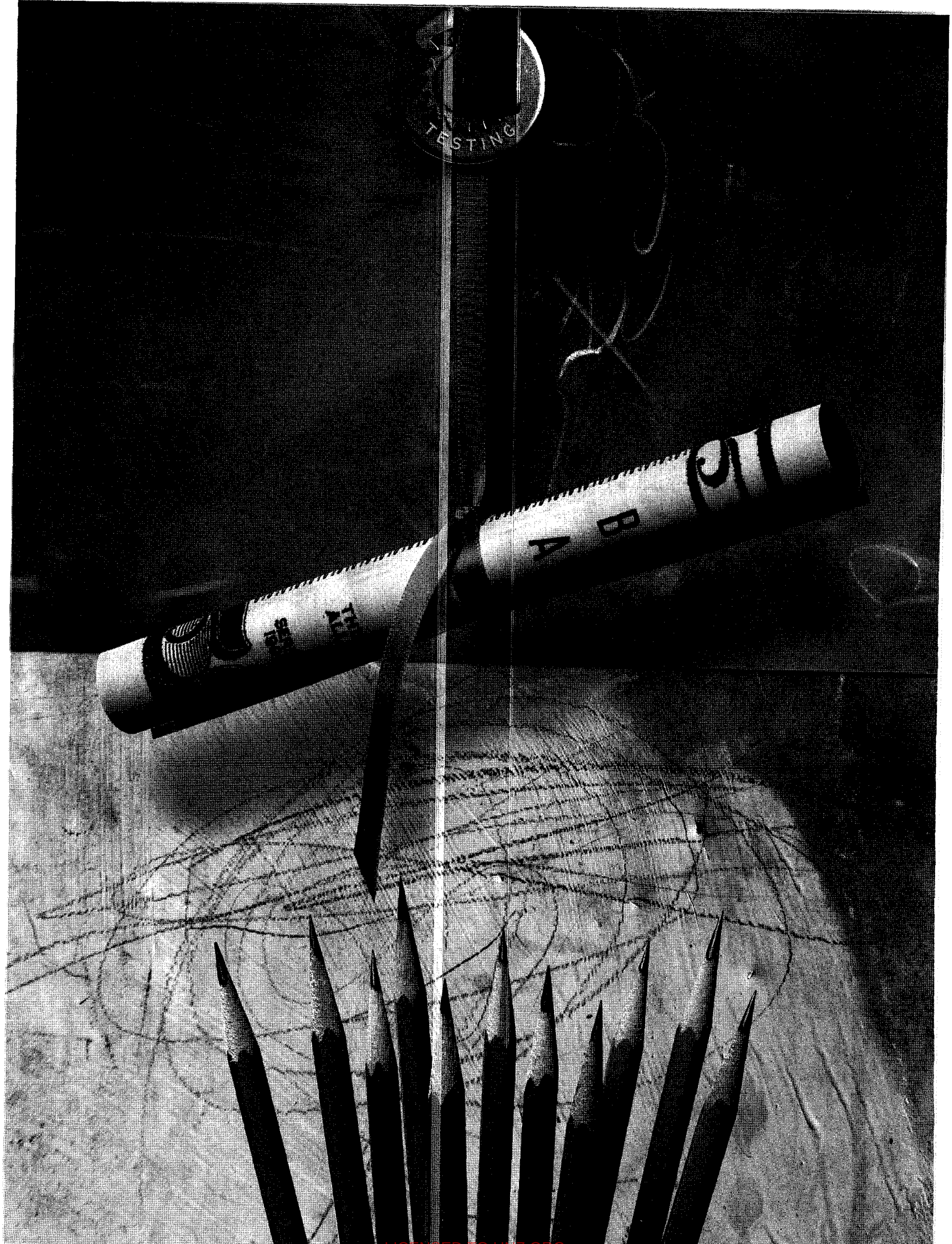

TESTING
B A

Cash *for* Test Scores

The impact of the Texas Advanced Placement Incentive Program

Cash incentives for high school students to perform better in school are growing in popularity, but we understand very little about them. Does paying students for better Advanced Placement (AP) test scores encourage enrollment in AP classes? Does it lead to more students taking the tests and achieving passing scores? Do cash incentives lead to more students going to college?

I set out to determine the impact of a cash incentive program operating in a number of Texas high schools. The Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) is a novel initiative that includes cash incentives for both teachers and students for each passing score earned on an Advanced Placement exam. The program is targeted to schools serving predominantly minority and low-income students with the aim of improving college readiness. The APIP was first implemented in 10 Dallas schools in 1996 and has been expanded to include more than 40 schools in Texas. The National Math and Science Initiative awarded grants to Arkansas, Alabama, Connecticut, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington to replicate the APIP and plans to expand these programs to 150 districts across 20 states.

Using data from the Texas Education Agency, I evaluated how the APIP affected education outcomes in participating schools in the years following implementation. I studied whether the program increased AP course enrollment and the share of students sitting for

BY C. KIRABO JACKSON

ILLUSTRATION / JOHN WEBER

AP (or International Baccalaureate [IB]) examinations. Since improved AP outcomes may not necessarily reflect increased learning and could come at the expense of other academic outcomes, I also looked beyond these immediate effects to the broader set of outcomes, such as high school graduation rates, SAT and ACT performance, and the percentage of students attending college.

According to my assessment, the incentives produce meaningful increases in participation in the AP program and improvements in other critical education outcomes. Establishment of APIP results in a 30 percent increase in the number of students scoring above 1100 on the SAT or above 24 on the ACT, and an 8 percent increase in the number of students at a high school who enroll in a college or university in Texas. My evidence suggests that these outcomes are likely the result of stronger encouragement from teachers and guidance counselors to enroll in AP courses, better information provided to students, and changes in teacher and peer norms. The program is not associated with improved high school graduation rates or increases in the number of students taking college entrance exams, suggesting that the APIP improves the outcomes of high-achieving students rather than those students who may not have graduated from high school or even applied to college. Nonetheless, APIP may be an exceptionally good investment. The average per-student cost of the program, between $100 and $300, is very small relative to reasonable estimates of the lifetime benefits of attending and succeeding in college.

The AP Incentive Program

The program is run by AP Strategies, a nonprofit organization based in Dallas, Texas. The heart of the program is a set of financial incentives for teachers and students based on AP examination performance. The APIP is entirely voluntary for schools, teachers, and students.

Once a donor has been identified, AP Strategies matches the benefactor with an interested district. Where there are several districts that are competing for the same donor, the donor's preference determines the district or the schools within the district that will implement APIP.

The Advanced Placement program has 35 courses and examinations across 20 subject areas. Students typically take AP courses in the 11th and 12th grades. The courses are intended to be "college level," and most colleges allow successful AP exam takers to use passing scores to offset degree requirements. Although it is unclear whether AP courses are actually equivalent to courses at all colleges, the fact that selective colleges pay considerable attention to a student's AP scores in the admissions process demonstrates that the exams are considered to be revealing about a student's likely preparation for and achievement in college. The exams are graded 1 through 5, with 5 being the highest and 3 generally regarded as a passing grade.

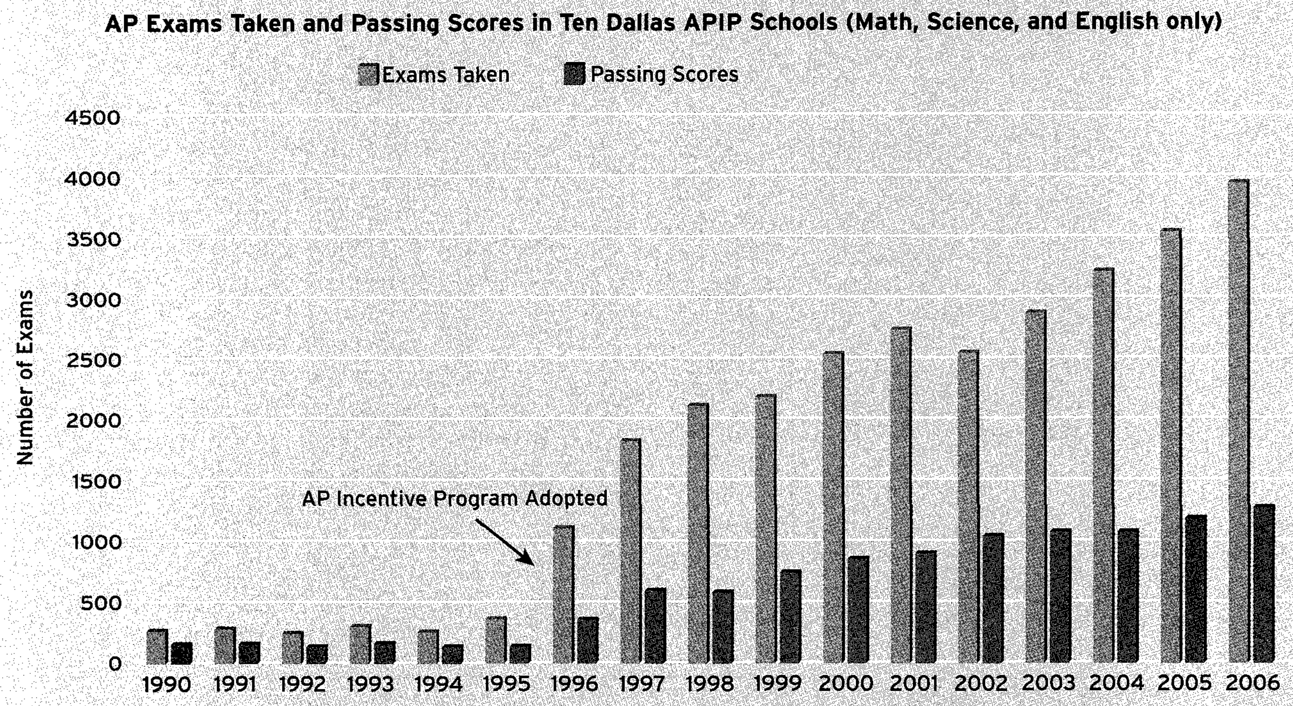
The APIP includes teacher training conducted by the College Board and a curriculum for earlier grades that prepares students for AP courses. At the top of each "vertical team" of teachers in APIP schools is a lead teacher who not only instructs students, but also spends time providing training for other AP teachers. Vertical teams include teachers whose grade precedes those in which AP courses are offered. For instance, a vertical team might create a math curriculum designed to prepare students for AP calculus in 12th grade. The curriculum might start as early as the 7th grade. This aspect of the APIP suggests that some of its benefits might not be felt until several years after it is first introduced at a school.

AP courses are taught during regular class time, and generally substitute for other courses in the same subject. In addition to the AP courses, there may be extra time dedicated to AP exam preparation. For example, in Dallas, the APIP offers special "prep sessions," where up to 800 students gather at a single high school to take seminars from AP teachers as they prepare for their AP exams.

In a school that has adopted APIP, students in 11th and 12th grade receive monetary incentives for performance on AP exams, which are intended to encourage participation and effort in AP courses. The amount paid per exam differs across districts. Students receive between $100 and $500 for each score of 3 or above in an eligible subject for which they took the course. This could amount to several hundred dollars for a student who takes and passes several AP examinations during the 11th and 12th grades. For example, one student earned $700 in his junior and senior years for passing scores on AP exams. Since the students must attend the course and pass the AP exams to receive the rewards, students who did not enroll in the AP courses would not take the exams in an attempt to

Early Returns in Dallas (Figure 1)

After launch of the AP Incentive Program (APIP) in 10 Dallas schools in 1996, the number of English, math, and science AP exams taken increased dramatically. The number of passing scores also rose.



SOURCE: Advanced Placement Strategies, Inc.

earn the cash rewards. The cash rewards more than offset student costs. The College Board's standard charge per examination is $82, and a fee reduction to $60 is granted to those students with demonstrated financial need. APIP pays half of each student's remaining fee, so students' out-of-pocket expense is very small.

Lead teachers receive an annual salary bonus of between $3,000 and $10,000, and an additional $2,000 to $5,000 bonus opportunity based on results. Pre-AP teachers earn an annual supplement of between $500 and $1,000 per year for extra work. AP teachers receive between $100 and $500 for each AP score of 3 or higher earned by an 11th or 12th grader enrolled in their course. Like the student rewards, the amount paid per passing AP score and the salary supplements vary across districts. Overall, though, the incentive program can deliver a considerable increase in compensation for teachers.

How, then, do schools adopt APIP? And who pays? The total cost of the program ranges between $100,000 and $200,000 per school per year, depending on the size of the school and its students' propensity for taking AP courses. Private donors defray between 60 and 75 percent of the total cost of the program, and the district covers the remainder. Districts usually pay for teacher training and corresponding travel and lodging, teacher release time, and some of the supplies and equipment costs. The donors fund the bonuses to students and teachers associated with passing AP scores, stipends to teachers for attending team meetings, and some of the supplies and equipment costs. Today, the districts may be able to fund their contributions from statewide funding and No Child Left Behind. When APIP began in 1996, however, such funds were not available.

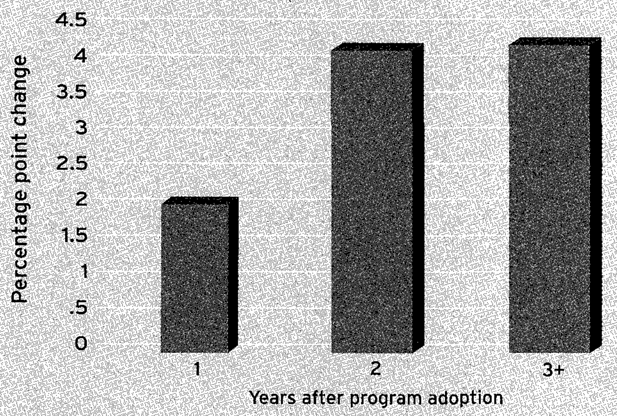
The donors choose the subjects in which rewards will be offered and determine the size of the financial rewards. While there are some differences across districts, English, math, and sciences are rewarded in most. Once a donor has been identified, AP Strategies matches the benefactor with an interested district. Where there are several districts that are competing for the same donor, the donor's preference determines the district or the schools within the district that will implement APIP.

Forty-one Texas schools have adopted the incentive program to date, and 61 schools will have adopted the program by the 2008–09 academic year. Donor availability and preferences are the primary reason some schools have adopted

Go Ahead, Test Me (Figure 2)

The adoption of the AP Incentive Program increased the percentage of students taking at least one AP or IB exam by two points after one year, and by roughly twice that amount once the program was in place for two or more years.

Impact of APIP on the Percentage of Students Taking At Least One AP or IB Exam



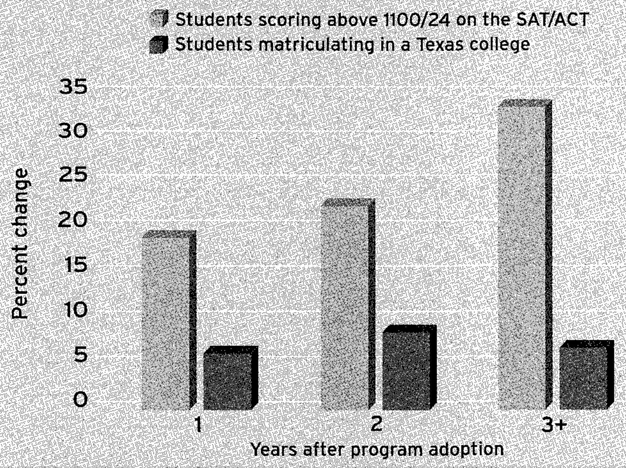
Note: Impacts estimated by comparing APIP schools to schools that were scheduled to adopt the program by 2008 and adjusting for changes in student demographics.

SOURCE: Author's calculations using Texas Education Agency data

Looking to the Future (Figure 3)

The AP Incentive Program also led to large increases in the number of Texas students scoring well on college entrance exams and matriculating in college.

Impact of APIP on College Admissions Test Scores and Matriculation



Note: Impacts estimated by comparing APIP schools to schools scheduled to adopt the program by 2008 and by adjusting for changes in student demographics.

SOURCE: Author's calculations using Texas Education Agency data

APIP and others have not. According to the executive vice president of AP Strategies, Walter Dewar, "Many districts are interested in the program but there are no donors. So there is always a shortage of donors."

Comparing Schools

Schools that have been selected for APIP look quite different from schools that have not yet been chosen and may never be chosen. Participating schools have much larger enrollments. They also have much larger black and Hispanic enrollment shares and lower white enrollment shares. APIP schools enroll relatively more Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and students who are classified as economically disadvantaged. About 90 percent of the schools selected for the program are located in large or medium-sized cities, compared to fewer than one-quarter of all schools in the state.

I evaluated the effect of APIP by making two sets of comparisons. I compared the education outcomes of students enrolled in an APIP school before implementation to the outcomes of students who were enrolled in the school after the program began. I then compared changes in the education outcomes across cohorts within APIP schools to changes, over the same time period, at schools where the program was never adopted. This second comparison with non-APIP schools enables me to separate out the impact of any policy, such as the Texas Advanced Placement incentive program or the 10 percent rule (every student in Texas in the top 10 percent of her graduating high-school class is guaranteed a spot at the public university of her choice), that could have occurred at the same time as APIP implementation and could otherwise be confused with the effect of APIP. In all the statistical analyses I performed, I took into account the influence of school characteristics, such as enrollment size and student demographics.

Comparing the outcomes of APIP schools to the outcomes of other schools could confuse the effects of the program with the difference between schools that want to participate in APIP and those that are not willing or able to. To avoid this, I compared changes in schools where APIP had been implemented to changes in schools that signed up for APIP and were waiting for a donor to fund their APIP implementation.

I obtained data on school demographics, high school graduation rates, and college entrance examinations from the publicly available Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) on the Texas Education Agency web site. Data are aggregated by school and span the years 1994 through 2004. College enrollment data come from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board web site and are available for the years 2002 through 2005. The final dataset combines these publicly available data with a listing of program schools by year provided by AP Strategies.

AP Classes and Examinations

At the 10 Dallas high schools that adopted the program in 1996, the number of students taking and the number passing AP exams in English, math, and science increased markedly the year following adoption and have continued to climb (see Figure 1). But is this due to APIP?

I found that APIP does appear to boost both AP course enrollment, albeit slowly, and the number of students taking AP exams. There is weak evidence of an increase in course enrollment in the first and second years following program adoption. In year three and onward, APIP appears to produce a large boost in AP course enrollment; the number of students in AP courses increases by 21 percent.

There is an immediate increase in the number of 11th- and 12th-grade students taking at least one AP exam or IB exam, another test taken for college credit (see Figure 2). In the first year of APIP, the number of students taking AP and IB examinations increases by 2 percentage points, followed by a 4-percentage-point increase in years two and beyond, with a similar boost for boys and girls. With an initial average rate of 18 percent of students taking AP or IB exams, this is a relative increase of 11 percent in year one of APIP and 23 percent by year two. The fact that course enrollment numbers do not increase until year three but exam-taking numbers rise sooner suggests that much of the initial increase in AP exam taking came from students who, in the absence of the APIP, would have taken the course but not the exam.

Increases in the percentage of students in 11th and 12th grades who take AP or IB exams are driven primarily by increased participation among black and Hispanic students.

Previous studies have shown that minority and low-income students tend to participate in AP courses and take AP exams at lower rates than middle-class white students at the same high schools. So did APIP improve AP participation by minority and low-income students? My results show that the campuswide increases in the percentage of students in 11th and 12th grades who take AP or IB exams are driven primarily by increased participation among black and Hispanic students. The results do not show any statistically significant effect of APIP on the proportion of white students who take at least one AP or IB exam. This does not mean that the total number of AP and IB exams taken by white students did not increase at APIP schools. It is entirely possible that white students who took one AP exam now take more AP courses and exams.

To learn more about the reasons behind the increased AP participation, I spoke with guidance counselors at three different APIP high schools in Dallas. Their comments indicate that there was a schoolwide campaign to increase participation in AP courses after APIP adoption. Two of the three high schools hired additional guidance counselors to improve the school's ability to identify those students who should be encouraged to take AP courses. At all three high schools, the guidance counselors received explicit instructions to identify those students who should be taking AP courses and to advertise AP courses. Guidance counselors and AP teachers sell the AP program to students who are interested in going to college by touting the scholarship money that can follow good AP exam scores. Counselors and teachers also emphasize the tuition that can be saved by graduating from high school having already earned college credits. In addition, the counselors reported that certain barriers to taking AP courses have been removed; at one high school, there used to be a minimum class rank that a student had to have in order to take AP courses, but after adoption of APIP, any interested student was allowed to take AP courses.

All the guidance counselors with whom I spoke mentioned a shift in student and teacher attitudes toward AP courses. Following encouragement from counselors and teachers, students now view AP courses as difficult ones that anyone can take, rather than being only for the very brightest of students. Of course, the financial incentives to students and teachers might be responsible for the increased teacher and student effort, but counselors downplayed these aspects of the program.

After the AP Test

In his 2004 State of the Union Address, President Bush announced a plan in which he proposed an increase from $24 to $52 million annually for the AP program authorized in the No Child Left Behind Act to support state and local efforts to

Guidance counselors had the impetus to advertise and inform students of the benefits of the AP program, teachers had the incentive to increase course enrollment, and students possessed greater motivation to take the courses and exams.

increase access to AP classes and tests (and other challenging curricular end-of-course examinations) for students in low-income schools. Several states have implemented programs with the same objective. A good example is the Western Consortium for Accelerated Learning Opportunities (WCALO) consisting of Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, and Utah. The rationale behind this push to increase AP participation is the observation that students who take AP courses and examinations are much more likely to enroll and be successful in college, as measured by college GPA and graduation rates. Students who take more rigorous math and science courses in high school, such as AP courses, also have significantly higher SAT scores.

With these claims in mind, I decided to study how far the impact of APIP extends beyond AP course enrollment and exam taking. I found there is, on average, a 22 percent increase in the share of students scoring above 1100 on the SAT or above 24 on the ACT. Broken down by year, there is a 19 percent increase in the number of students scoring above 1100 on the SAT and above 24 on the ACT exam in the first year of the program, a 22 percent increase the second year, and a 33 percent increase by the third year on (see Figure 3). The effect in the first year is somewhat large in light of the fact that some seniors might have taken the SAT or ACT after being exposed to APIP for just half the school year. It may be that the improvements in SAT and ACT performance are not solely due to exposure to AP courses; a related increase in effort on college entrance exams may have been caused by a heightened desire to get into a good college. In general, though, the effects of the program in the first and second year are likely due to the effects of the monetary incentives for students and teachers, as well as accompanying improvements in AP instruction. Any improvement in pre-AP instruction produced by the vertical teaching teams would affect the outcomes of graduates only after three or four years.

Looking at the SAT and ACT performance of high school graduates by racial group, the percentage changes (about 5 percentage points from the third year on) are similar among white, black, and Hispanics, but the differences in impact relative to the prior performance of each group are sizable. While there is about a 12 percent relative increase in white students scoring above 1100 on the SAT and above 24 on the ACT, there is a 50 percent relative increase for Hispanics, and an 80 percent relative increase for black students. Given that Hispanics and blacks are typically underrepresented at the top of the graduating class, they have more room for improvement.

There is also a 7 percent increase in the number of students attending a college or university in Texas (see Figure 3), and this change remains roughly constant from year to year. Interestingly, however, APIP adoption does not improve a high school's graduation rate or increase the percentage of students who take the SAT or ACT.

So what could explain why APIP does not produce improved educational outcomes across the board? Why, for example, would there be an increase in the percentage of students matriculating in college but no increase in the percentage of students who sit for college entrance exams? One possible explanation is that the absence of an increase in SAT and ACT taking suggests that APIP may not lead more students to decide to apply to college. Instead, APIP might help students who are already interested in attending college to gain admission and encourage them to enroll. Transcripts burnished with AP courses and passing scores on AP exams could increase the likelihood of admission and improve financial aid offers. APIP could also make college more affordable, as passing scores on AP exams create tuition savings. Because low-income students are sensitive to tuition costs, the potential tuition savings created by the ability to earn college credit, or even increased financial aid, could induce more of these students to enroll in college once accepted.

As I discovered these positive changes in educational outcomes, I began to wonder if AP courses were improving student performance in these other areas or if bright students were transferring to APIP schools to take advantage of AP courses. This concern grew as I noticed that the implementation of APIP is associated with an almost 6 percent increase in 12th-grade enrollment once the program has been in place one year.

The fact that students at APIP schools were no more likely to graduate from high school or take the SAT or ACT makes it improbable that an influx of high-performing students is responsible for the improvements observed for other outcomes. Still, I decided to conduct a more direct test to rule out the possibility that improvements in educational outcomes were due to migration of high-performing students into APIP schools. Focusing on high school graduates who were at the same school for all four years, I was able to obtain counts of the number of white and Hispanic graduates scoring above 1100 on the SAT and above 24 on the ACT. Comparing the number of students scoring at these levels before and after the adoption of APIP, I found that, by the third year of APIP, the number of white and Hispanic students scoring above 1100 on the SAT and above 24 on the ACT increased by 26 percent and 18 percent, respectively. I also obtained counts for white, black, and Hispanic graduates scoring above 900 on the SAT or above 19 on the ACT exams. By the third year of the program, APIP increases the number of white and Hispanic graduates scoring above 900 on the SAT and above 19 on the ACT by 26 percent and 38 percent, respectively, although there is no change for black students. In sum, although there may be some migration by high-performing students to APIP schools, schools that adopt APIP see better scores on college entrance exams among students who have always attended their school.

On a related note, I cannot rule out the possibility of an influx of quality teachers to APIP schools during the program's first year. This would not diminish the success of the program, but would suggest that improvements in teacher inputs were a part of the story.

Conclusion

Through APIP, the interests of schools, teachers, and students were aligned. Guidance counselors had the impetus to advertise and inform students of the benefits of the AP program, teachers had the incentive to increase AP course enrollment, and students possessed greater motivation to take the courses and exams. The result was a change in the educational culture in a select group of Texas high schools, which in turn led to improved student outcomes.

While I show that the program is likely to have lasting effects on students because they are more apt to attend college, it would be useful to determine the long-term effects of APIP by observing the students affected by APIP when they go to college and into the labor force. If this program increases a student's likelihood of attending college, elevates the quality of college attended, and reduces the time it takes to graduate from college, the costs of the program on a per-student basis would be far less than the average increase in lifetime earnings. That would be a whole new kind of smart money.

Kirabo Jackson is assistant professor of labor economics at Cornell University.

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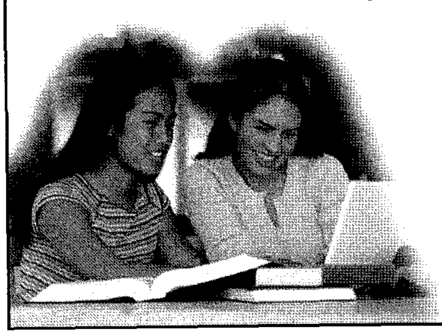

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book review

Something's Better Than Nothing

Why technology in education doesn't need to be very good

Disrupting Class: Why Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns

By Clayton M. Christensen,
with Michael B. Horn
and Curtis W. Johnson

McGraw-Hill, 2008, $32.95; 288 pages.

As reviewed by Nathan Glazer

Clayton Christensen is a professor at the Harvard Business School and the author of a widely used book on innovations in business titled *The Innovator's Dilemma*. Published originally in 1997, with the subtitle "when new technologies cause great firms to fail," *The Innovator's Dilemma* went into a second edition in 2000 with a new tag line, "the revolutionary bestseller that changed the way we do business." I note further editions published in 2003 and 2006. Clearly there is something here that has been of interest in the world of business schools and business management.

Christensen is an expert on Silicon Valley, its changing products and fortunes, but in his new book, written with two colleagues, he draws on the history of many other fields of business enterprise, from making automobiles and radios to launching new kinds of investment opportunities. His central idea is there is a kind of "disruptive innovation" that causes great companies to fail and new start-ups to replace them. Here he applies the theory of disruptive innovation to the field of education. What can we learn from this transfer of tools of analysis, apparently helpful in business, to education?

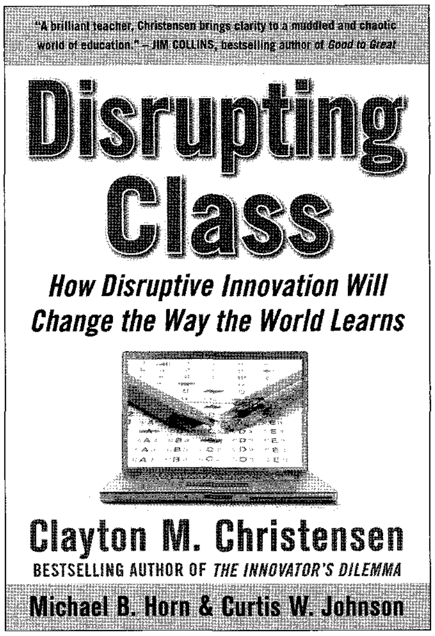
Christensen sets the stage by asking why it is so hard to improve schools, running through some common explanations: We don't spend enough money on them, we don't use enough computers, students have become lazy and media- and game-addicted, schools are just too traditional. And then there are the teachers unions. While he accepts that all may play a role in school failure, he sees another as the central problem: education and schooling are not childcentric and in particular do not respond to the reality that children are different and learn differently. He is a strong advocate of the work of Howard Gardner on "multiple intelligences," supporting Gardner's theory that there are many kinds of intelligence, and many ways of learning, and that different children bring different kinds of intelligence to the learning endeavor. Thus, according to Christensen, the traditional classroom, with children of a given age being taught by a single teacher using a common pedagogy, will not do. Effective reform requires "customization" of the process of teaching, to adapt to the varying styles of different children. And the way to attain this new model of education is through the computer, with its ability to present a nearly infinite variety of ways of teaching in almost any field. But standing in the way of such a transformation is the fixed structure of the school, the age-determined set of classes, slotted into a curriculum where one learns certain things at a certain age and must move on to the topics determined as suitable for the next year.

"Disruption" of this pattern is required, and Christensen leads us through his theory of "disruptive innovation," which he contrasts with "sustaining innovation." "Sustaining innovation" is one improvement after another in a given product—the automobile, the telephone, the business computer—which the product innovation departments of established companies introduce. But there is another kind of innovation, which the established companies do not recognize, or do not consider profitable, or cannot fit easily into their established patterns. Christensen offers many examples from business history: the large business computer was displaced by the personal computer, the fixed radio set by the small transistor-driven portable. Leading corporations were blind-sided by these disruptive innovations. This is what education needs if we are to see improvement (see "How Do We Transform Our Schools?" *features*, Summer 2008).

Are charter schools this kind of disruptive innovation? Teachers unions and public school systems think so, but they will not quite do for Christensen, though he recognizes some as being truly innovative. Does the huge expansion in the number of computers in schools serve as an appropriate disruptive innovation? It could, but it doesn't, because they are used primarily to supplement old practices rather than establish the new ones that are truly disruptive and innovative. The truly disruptive innovation, according to Christensen, is one that is directed to the nonconsumer of the established product. This seems to be a key feature of his theory: The small personal computer did not supplement the large business computer of the early days of the computer revolution, but instead served those who didn't have any computers at all; the transistor-driven small radio was embraced by those who had no other access to radios.

But how do we apply this story, based on histories of business successes and failures, to schools? By way of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the computer's capacity to provide different ways of teaching and learning. Christensen heads each chapter with a vignette featuring students, teachers, and administrators in an imaginary high school. In one of these vignettes Maria, an able student interested in learning Arabic, which is not offered in the school, is directed to a computer program and shown happily learning the new language. This is an example of the "nonconsumer"—this student was not already taking Arabic, though she may have been studying another language. Rob is an able athlete—an example of Gardner's "bodily-kinesthetic intelligence"—who is having difficulty with chemistry. He also gets connected to a computer program, which teams him up with a Japanese student who is eager to learn English and will in exchange help him with his chemistry. One is less optimistic that this approach to improving chemistry for Rob will work as well as the Arabic program for Maria. One wonders, too, whether there is any kind of specialized computer program imaginable that will make use of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to improve knowledge of chemistry.

Christensen is aware of the strong class differences among children as reflected in school achievement, but he is convinced by research that shows that a great part of intellectual ability is determined by the experience of the first 36 months of life, particularly the amount and kind of language directed to children. Nothing much can be done about that when the children reach school, even in pre-kindergarten, so he puts his money on multiple intelligences and the computer.


"A brilliant teacher, Christensen brings clarity to a muddled and chaotic world of education." —JIM COLLINS, bestselling author of Good to Great
Disrupting Class
How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns
Clayton M. Christensen
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE INNOVATOR'S DILEMMA
Michael B. Horn & Curtis W. Johnson

Christensen acknowledges the many problems that are involved in what he hopes will be a revolutionary change in how education works, when many kinds of imaginative computer programs addressed to all kinds of students are in use. The lockstep system of education is bolstered by many institutions, such as the production and adoption of widely used uniform textbooks, and Christensen hopes that they will be undermined by the rapid advance of computerized teaching programs, adapted to different children. He sees opportunities for this kind of disruptive innovation in the small rural schools that cannot offer many subjects, in urban secondary schools in low-income areas with similarly restricted course offerings, and for homebound and home-schooled students. He sees the beginnings of a market response in companies such as Apex Learning, established by Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen. Enrollment in online-delivered courses rose from 45,000 in 2000 to 1 million in 2007. From a perspective based on the experience of innovative growth in other areas, Christensen writes that "the data suggest that by 2019 about 50 percent of high school courses will be delivered online." This is an astonishing projection, and one doesn't know what to make of it. Is it really possible? Christensen shows a surprising self-confidence on other matters as well. Critical of contemporary education research, he touts an approach which seems not particularly different, but from which he expects great results. "Other fields," he writes, "have bodies of research that allow people to predict with great certainty the results of actions." "Great certainty?" I wonder.

Disrupting Class breathes a degree of confidence that is on the whole foreign to the world of education, one that may be characteristic of the world of the business school. In business case studies, one learns just why businesses succeed or fail, and the course of action that would have avoided failure. In the world of real business, things are of course not so simple. Undoubtedly more, and one hopes better, use of computers will be made. Perhaps they can be adapted to different styles of learning. Christensen envisages this as emerging from "user networks" developing "user-generated content." That certainly seems more feasible, if it can be done, than the enormous upfront expense incurred in developing a large array of courses adapted to different kinds of students. But one cannot resist a degree of skepticism. What we have learned to value in schooling is verbal and mathematical skills, and perhaps we have been excessive in the degree to which we value the kinds of intelligence that lead to high achievement in these competencies. But such achievement cannot be attained by every style of intelligence, using distinctive means adapted to it. So I remain skeptical of the prospects for "disruptive innovation" in our education system if its success will rely on heightening the role of other kinds of intelligence.

Nathan Glazer is professor emeritus of education and sociology at Harvard University.

book review

Where Did NCLB Come From?

The true story of the federal role in education

See Government Grow: Education Politics from Johnson to Reagan

By Gareth Davies

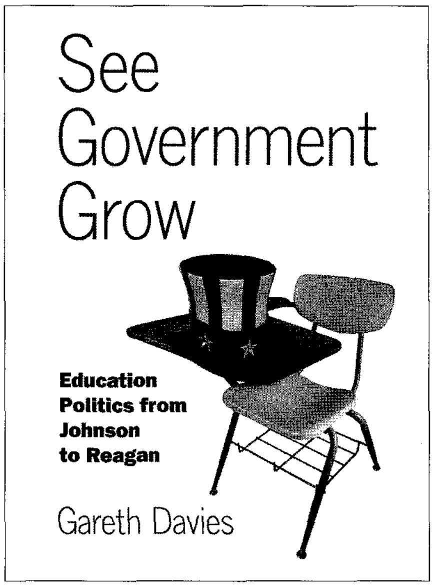
University Press of Kansas, 2007, $39.95; 387 pages.

As reviewed by Luther Spoehr

Gareth Davies, a historian at Oxford University, brings care and precision to his study of the process that produced federal education legislation and regulation in the United States from the mid-1960s into the 1980s. His book illustrates both the possibilities and the limitations of this approach to the history of education policy.

Davies starts out by telling how President Lyndon Johnson, after his 1964 landslide victory over Barry Goldwater, made the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 integral to his War on Poverty. Previously, federal involvement in education had been minimal, even after Congress responded to the Russians' launch of *Sputnik* by passing the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958.

Initially, ESEA money had few federal strings attached; there was little oversight or accountability. The amount of money involved was relatively small—federal aid never amounted to more than 10 percent of the total cost of education—and vocal constituencies in districts around the country fought for every available dollar. Quoting historian James T. Patterson on the growth of "rights consciousness," Davies notes that those constituencies often defended ESEA and demanded its expansion with the language and logic of the civil rights movement.



Davies's biggest contribution comes in his discussion of the post-Johnson years, when he criticizes the master narrative that portrays post-1960s American politics as "a sustained reaction against Great Society liberalism." While not denying that such a reaction took place, he finds that in education "the persistence and even growth of big government during a supposedly conservative era" matters more. Congressional votes are revealing: four-fifths of House Republicans voted against ESEA in 1965; when it was renewed in 1974, "conservative opposition had all but disappeared."

Strong chapters on school desegregation, bilingual education, education for the disabled, and school finance all support Davies's argument that "in the 1970s, reform often emanated from...within the federal bureaucracy, from the lower federal courts, and through the energetic efforts of congressional staffers, lobbyists, and public interest law firms." Education reform's "comparative detachment from...electoral politics" allowed the push for change to continue.

Reformers were opportunistic. Nobody who wrote or supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964 thought that the term "minority" included so-called language minorities. But in 1970 the new head of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), J. Stanley Pottinger, saw his opportunity and took it. New regulations eventually became law, and at the Supreme Court the solicitor general (strict constructionist Robert Bork!) successfully defended the "Lau remedies," regulations stemming from *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) requiring, among other things, that students be instructed in their native language until deemed ready for English-only classrooms.

The same "minority rights" arguments appeared in the policy debates that led to the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (famous as PL 94-142). Davies observes that no "mass mobilization" of the disabled demanded change, and "the White House was completely absent from the story." The essential participants were progressive public-interest lawyers, agreeable lower courts, and local school districts anxious that they not be stuck with the entire special education bill.

By the time the reader gets to the Carter-Reagan years, Davies has established his main point: in the 1970s, prior reforms were well protected, and disparate groups pushed, sometimes successfully, for more. In 1979 President Jimmy Carter made good on his promise to establish a separate Department of Education (more for political than educational reasons). Campaigning against Carter in 1980, and consistent with his claim that government was the problem, not the solution, Ronald Reagan vowed to dismantle the new department, only to find once in office this was easier said than done. Opposed by powerful institutionalized interests (who were aided by his own subtly subversive secretary of education, Terrel Bell), Reagan decided that the game wasn't worth the candle. Then, with the luck that attended much of his career, Reagan made education reform his own when the National Commission on Excellence in Education announced in 1983 that the nation was "at risk."

Still ahead were the "standards movement," culture wars, the "education presidencies" of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, and, of course, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These are beyond the scope of Davies's book. But the increasingly convoluted, intricate pattern of "policy innovation" he describes foreshadows future policymaking trends.

Davies's dissection of these complexities scuttles any notion that things turn out as they do because a single powerful person or group wants it that way. His narrative spotlights the compromises, unintended consequences, miscalculations, and ad hoc adjustments that make laws and regulations the products of chance and circumstance. At the same time, his story fits neatly into another master narrative, one about the decline of federalism in the United States. With "states rights" and "local control" discredited by association with segregationists, people resisting federal involvement in education lacked an ideology to justify their stance and the political means to sustain it. Davies notes, "conservatives have...decisively [abandoned] the small government faith of their forefathers."

Davies is consistently persuasive; his research is prodigious, particularly in his exploration of government archives, as well as memoirs and oral histories by policy participants. But his approach has significant limits. Although Davies says his "analysis is predicated on the assumption that compensatory programs...have fallen short of the buoyant expectations of the mid-1960s," and notes that even at the time there was a "lack of convincing evidence that federal dollars were improving the quality of American education," he does not explain why those expectations existed, or why dissenting voices went unheeded. Writers and educators who generated outrage or excitement, such as Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, Ivan Illich, and others, go unmentioned. James Coleman's famous 1966 report, dubious about the ability of schools to promote equality, gets less than a full sentence. Were policymakers unaware of these views?

In short, Davies shortchanges the role of the Zeitgeist and ignores important parts of the context (schools, for instance) where policy played out. His narrow vision lets him dodge the question that should ultimately engage historians of American public education: to what extent, if any, were schools, teachers, and students better or worse off as a result of federal involvement in education policymaking? Good as it is, *See Government Grow* also shows why we need to keep "education" in the study of "education policy."

Luther Spoehr is lecturer in the departments of education and history at Brown University.

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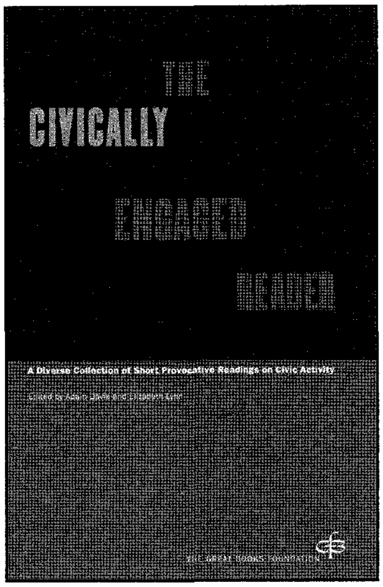
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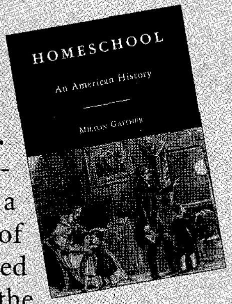
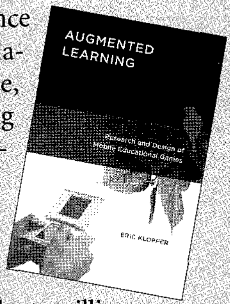
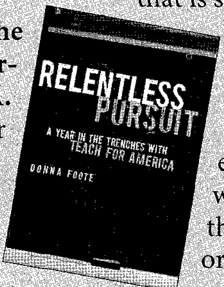


Homeschool: An American History. Milton Gaither (Palgrave Macmillan). This engaging scholarly work offers a sweeping history of education conducted in the home from the colonial period through the present. It charts the evolution of domestic instruction from a familiar practice actively encouraged by government into the modern home-schooling movement, for which teaching children at home was something akin to an act of political protest. Gaither rightly includes the colorful figures on the political left and the religious right whose writings helped to stimulate contemporary home schooling's incredible growth, yet his is no history of great men. A dutiful social historian, he instead emphasizes broader social changes in the postwar era, from the bureaucratization of public schools to suburbanization, that enabled fresh ideas on home schooling to take root. He also calls attention to the hard work of ordinary Americans, virtually all of them women, to put those ideas into practice, often in the face of legal and social pressures. Largely owing to the efforts of these modern pioneers, the notion of educating children at home has moved from the fringes of American society toward its mainstream. An idea with a long history, it may also have a bright future.

Augmented Learning: Research and Design of Mobile Educational Games. Eric Klopfer (MIT Press). Writing about education technology tends to dwell on long-term visions or tout the merits of expensive hardware investments (one laptop per child, anyone?). In this new book, MIT professor Eric Klopfer provides a welcome departure from that norm, explaining in scholarly but accessible prose how simulations designed for cheap, mobile technologies can enhance learning. One simulation, for instance, entails students being introduced to genetics through an exercise in which a classroom of students "breeds" via PalmPilot, with students milling about and touching their Palms to mate. Generations of successive breeding create a database that reflects parental and offspring traits, enabling teachers to initiate discussions that are both experiential and data-based. Anecdotes and evidence make a compelling case that these games are effective at engaging students and helping them master academic content. Klopfer also offers a concise review of our history with education technology, a discussion of various exercises, and principles for employing these tools and designing games. Perhaps most alluring is that all of this activity is explicitly designed for inexpensive and readily available handheld devices like cell phones, Game Boys, and Palms.

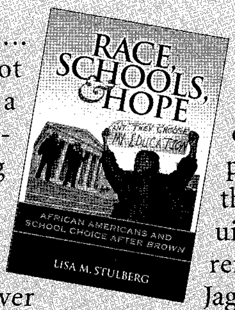


Relentless Pursuit: A Year in the Trenches with Teach For America. Donna Foote (Alfred A. Knopf). Since 1990, Teach For America (TFA) has placed 17,000 teachers in more than 1,000 high-need schools, and the organization has ambitious plans for expanding more rapidly. This year, 24,700 college seniors applied for about 3,700 teaching slots. In this new book, journalist Donna Foote follows four recent college graduates through TFA's summer boot camp and their rookie year in the classroom at Locke High School in Los Angeles (which has since joined the Green Dot Public Schools network). The author takes readers deep into the lives of these smart, talented, and highly motivated TFA corps members. The "up close and personal" approach mostly reveals how unbelievably difficult it is to be a first-year teacher at a dysfunctional inner-city school. Because the teachers are deeply committed to their mission, the job takes over their lives. Many observers of highly effective inner-city schools like KIPP Academy have wondered whether the lifestyle is sustainable for teachers who are expected to work around the clock to support their students. For TFA corps members at Locke, the job can be even more challenging, since their school lacks a set curriculum, a strong administration, and a functioning bureaucracy to back it up.



It is easy to see why some corps members leave before their two-year teaching commitment is up. Central and local TFA staff study the early leavers closely in an effort to figure out how best to support their teachers, but that's not the only thing that is studied closely. TFA support staff are busy implementing structured assessments and crunching numbers in an effort to determine what works and how to fix anything that's broken in the organization. Expectations are sky-high and everyone is stretched too thin, but the organization maintains an admirable degree of professionalism. Some of the most interesting parts of the book show how TFA has grown (and grown up) as an organization.

Race, Schools, & Hope: African Americans and School Choice after *Brown*. Lisa M. Stulberg (Teachers College Press). Plodding through this book can be a maddening exercise, what with its paeans to progressive icons (Cornel West! Howard Zinn!), its disdain for "White, Republican, conservative choice supporters and funders," and, well, its obsession with race. But like paying taxes, plodding through it is a painful experience that behooves you nonetheless. For the reader will learn about the historical roots of African American enthusiasm for school choice (embodied most fully by Black Alliance for Educational Options founder Howard Fuller), encountering an intellectual history from Black Power to New York's community control wars to the movement for black independent schools to today's arguments over vouchers and charter schools. In this history Stulberg sees signs that black supporters of choice aren't so much giving up on the public schools as giving voice to their hopes for a better education system. Certain (white) school-choice advocates argue that theirs is the "next civil rights movement." They should read this book to understand the full implications of that statement. They may or may not like what they learn.



Envelope Frenzy: One Year, Five Promising Students, and the Pursuit of the Ivy League Prize. Joie Jager-Hyman (Harper). "After hearing the news from MIT, Nabil…called both Princeton and MIT to negotiate for more time…. Princeton, however, would not budge…" and Nabil "will be a member of the Princeton University class of 2011. 'I wasn't crying or anything,'" Nabil bravely reassures the author, while mournfully "picking his cuticles." Readers inclined to get weepy over inadequate MIT financial aid packages will find plenty of pathos in this journalistic account by former Dartmouth admissions officer Jager-Hyman. Employing the usual tropes of the genre, Jager-Hyman follows five high schoolers applying to college, providing an up-close look at gymnastics practices, angst-ridden SAT exams, and anxious mailbox checking. True to form, the students are all bright-eyed, passionate, and sympathetic, including the requisite Hurricane Katrina refugee. Along the way, Jager-Hyman offers a window into collegiate admissions decisions, some history of the SAT, and insight into the financial aid office. While the volume is informative, evocative, and a pleasant enough read, this reader's primary reaction to finishing was relief at escaping from these painfully earnest kids and the author's saccharine prose.

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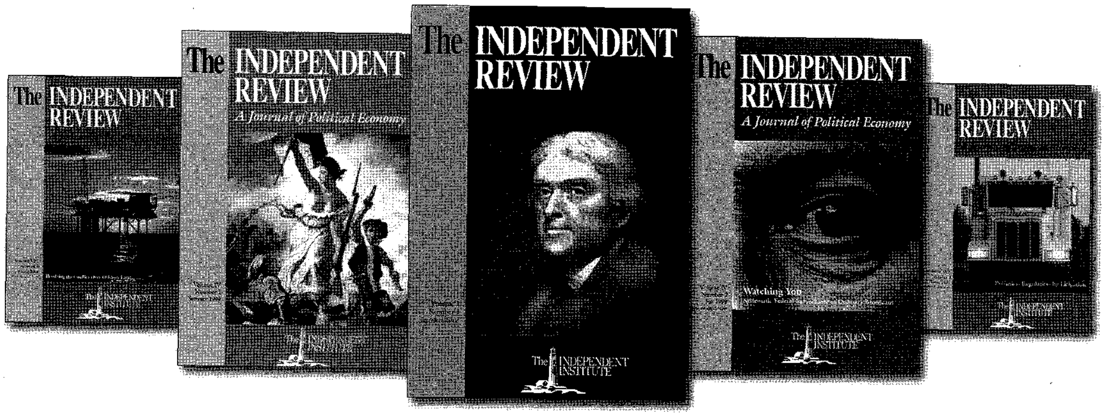

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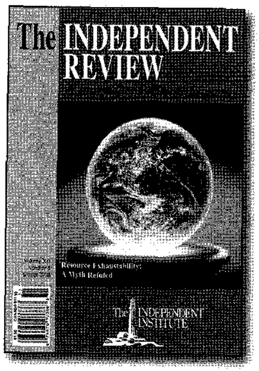

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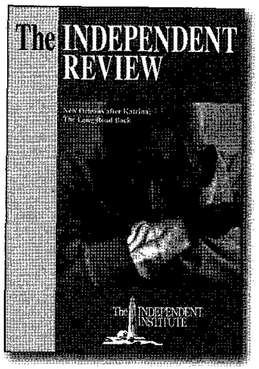

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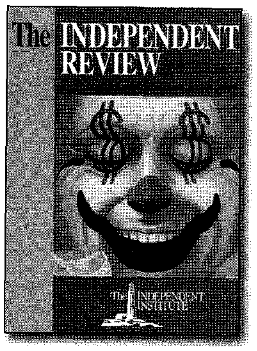

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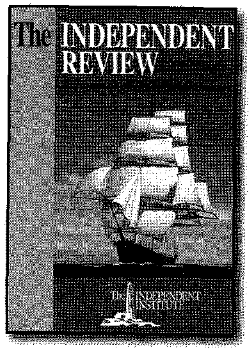

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what next

Arrested Development

Online training is the norm in other professions. Why not in K–12 education?

BY MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

Everyone knows that the Internet is changing the way the world works, plays, and connects. Yet its most powerful applications only seem obvious after some entrepreneur has brought them to life. Of course the web is a great way to distribute books, but it took Amazon to make this clear. Of course the Internet is a smart way to distribute movies, but it took Netflix to make it happen.

> **Most professionals would rather develop their skills online than sit in day-long, mind-numbing "workshops."**

So it is with adult learning. Most professionals would rather develop their skills online, on their own schedule, at their own pace, than sit in day-long, mind-numbing "workshops" that bring a lot of boredom and frustration but little intellectual stimulation. So it's not surprising that as long ago as 2006 (eons in Internet time) the American Society for Training and Development reported that across all sectors almost 40 percent of professional development (PD) was delivered via technology (See figure 1). (Surely the numbers are even higher now.)

One would think that our elementary and secondary education system would embrace online learning for teachers and administrators, too. Traditional professional development for educators isn't exactly winning rave reviews; in 2006, for example, the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher found that only half of teachers thought that "providing more opportunities for professional development would help a lot in keeping good people in teaching."

It's not hard to understand why: as with other professionals—or even K–12 students—individual teachers don't want or need homogenized training. They need "differentiated instruction," targeted to where they are in their careers and focused on the subjects they teach, their own strengths and skills gaps. None of this is easy to deliver in traditional settings.

And school schedules make face-to-face training logistically challenging. Some districts have created special "professional development" days for their teachers (likely not popular with working parents); others try to cram PD into the heads of exhausted instructors as soon as the closing bell rings.

As in so many other areas, our education system appears to be lagging behind in exploiting the Internet. Last year the National Research Council (NRC) published *Enhancing Professional Development for Teachers: Potential Uses of Information Technology*. It reported on a recent survey by Leah O'Donnell of consulting firm Eduventures, which found that six in seven teachers had participated in "conventional" professional development experiences, but a "markedly lower" proportion had access to online training.

This is particularly perplexing, given that teachers could be receiving targeted training in the comfort of their own homes, on their own schedule, and without the hassle or frustration of face-to-face PD. And the offerings of online teacher training are growing—and growing better. For example, PBS's TeacherLine offers more than 100 interactive courses for pre-K–12 teachers, who can earn PD credits or (for a nominal fee) even college credit for completing them. Or consider CaseNEX, an online professional development company that spun off from the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education. Via online video, teachers can engage with real-life "case studies" of classroom challenges and participate in an interactive online community of professionals. And yes, they can earn credits for doing so.

So why aren't K–12 educators embracing online professional development in greater numbers? The NRC report suggests several possible reasons, including a lack of knowledge about such opportunities among teachers and administrators; a bias among principals for more traditional methods; and institutional resistance from district professional development staff who might see their own jobs disappear if teachers bypass their programs and engage in training created from afar.

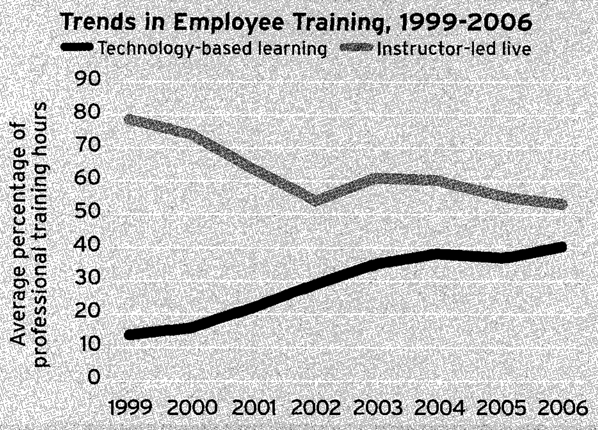
This institutional resistance appears to be the most likely explanation, but it's not limited to central office staff. As with so many things in life, the problem comes down to money. Traditional professional development providers (including colleges of education) have a lot of dollars at stake in the face-to-face model. They are likely to be outcompeted by national providers in the purveyance of customized teacher training.

And teachers themselves have come to expect to be compensated for the time they spend in professional development activities. A recent study by *Education Next* executive editor Frederick M. Hess for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute found that the collective bargaining agreements of more than half of the nation's 50 largest school districts mandate that teachers be paid stipends for participating in PD outside of the regular school day. If these teachers participated in online professional development instead, at home, at night or on the weekends, would they have to be paid for their time? It's not clear.

Perhaps accountability is an issue, too. Under the traditional model, teachers get credit just for showing up. In an online setting, they would probably have to demonstrate mastery of a subject via an assessment. And almost nothing stirs up a faculty lounge more than the dreaded words "teacher testing."

Going Online (Figure 1)

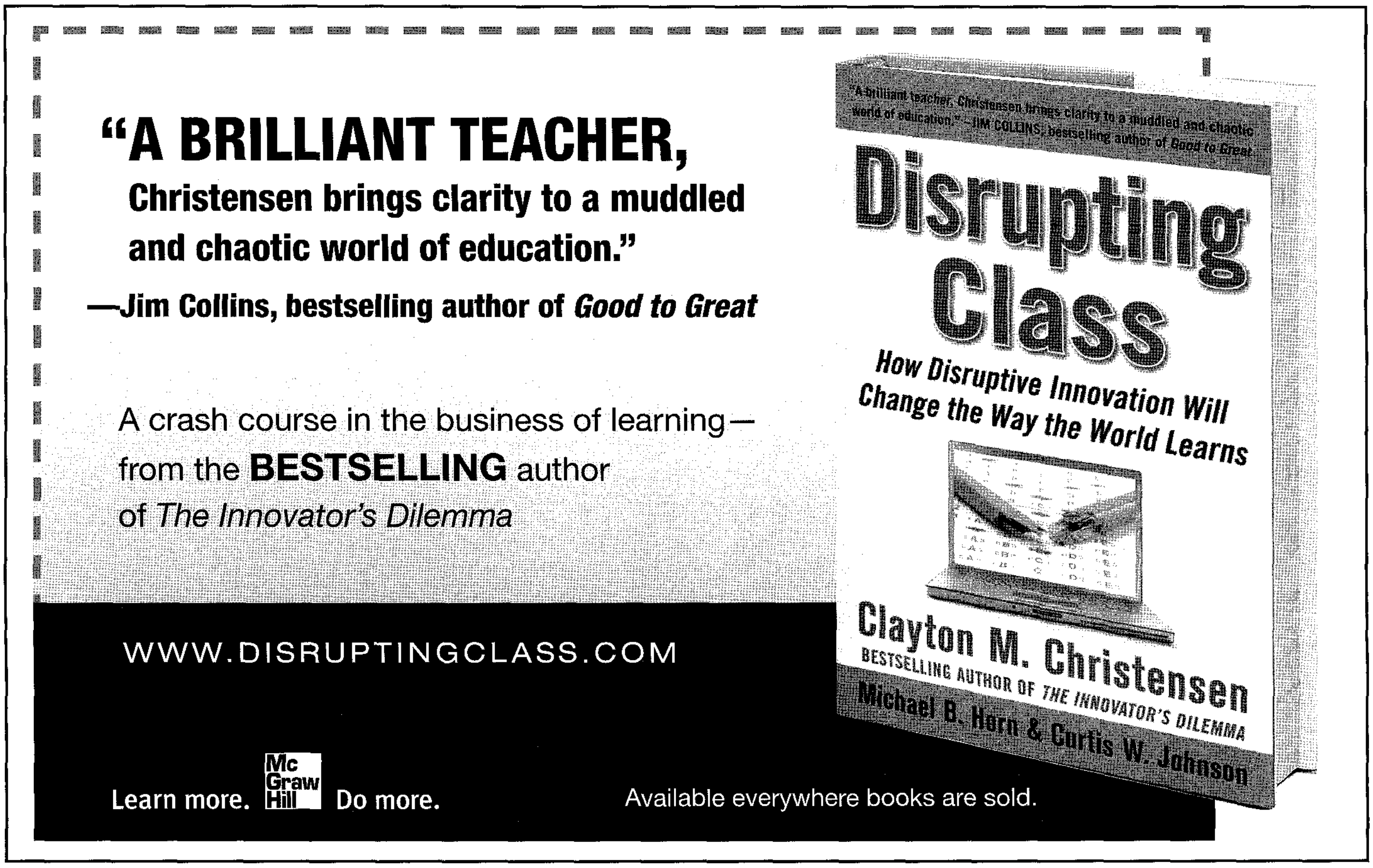
Private and public sector organizations outside of education have seen a steady shift away from live instructor-led training toward technology-based training.



Note: Data are from participants in the Benchmarking Forum, a consortium of public and private companies.

SOURCE: American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), Investing in Learning; Looking for Performance, 2006 ASTD State of the Industry

Still, judging from the Internet's success in revolutionizing other fields, eventually the resistance to online professional development will crumble. How long that will take will be a decent indicator of just how calcified our education system has become. ■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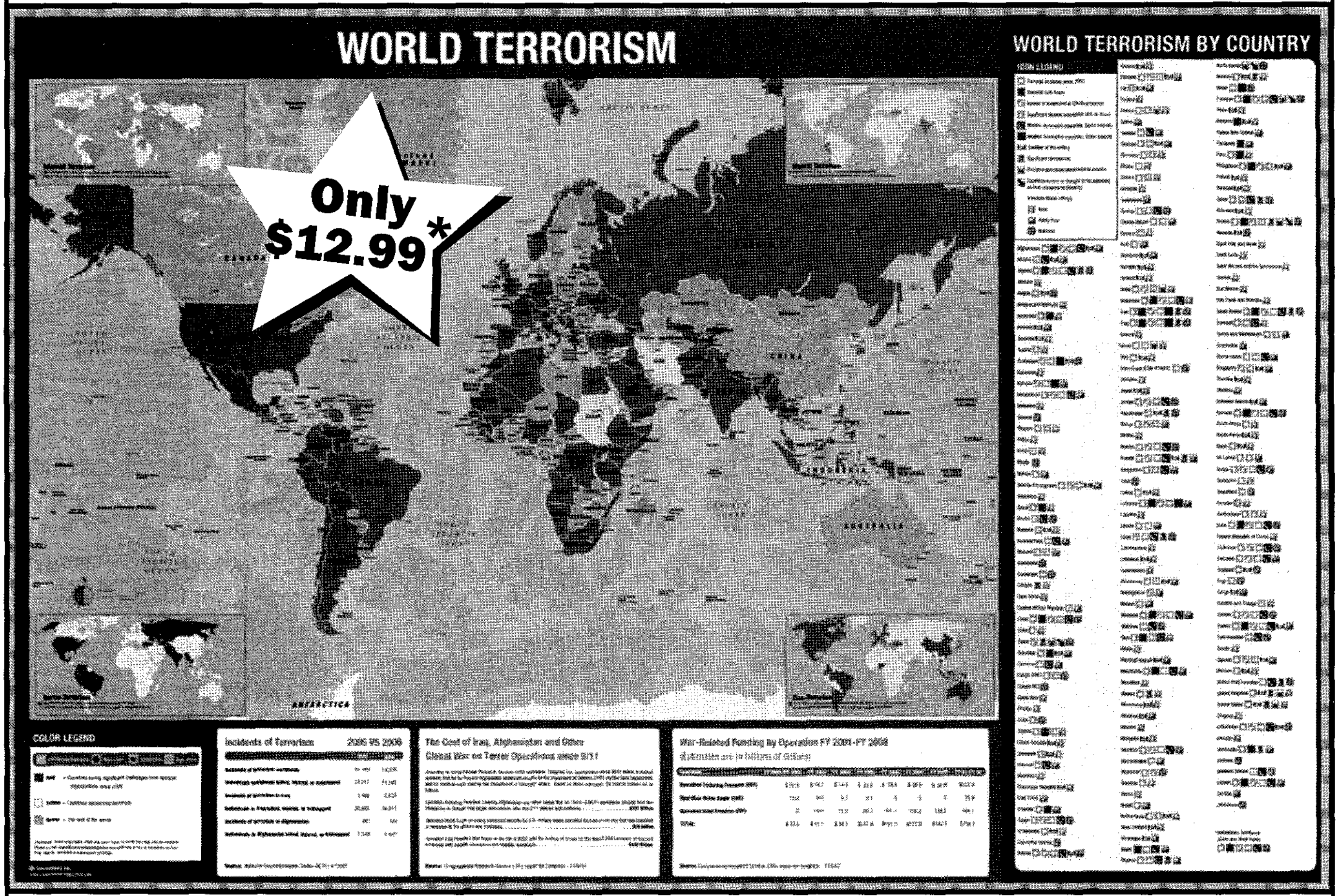

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What Do College Students Know?

By this professor's calculations, math skills have plummeted

BY W. STEPHEN WILSON

Professors are constantly asked if their students are better or worse today than in the past. I conducted an experiment to try to answer that question for one group of students.

For my fall 2006 course, Calculus I for the Biological and Social Sciences at Johns Hopkins University (JHU), I administered the same final exam I had used for the course in the fall of 1989. The SAT mathematics (SATM) scores of the two classes were nearly identical, and the classes contained approximately the same percentage of the Arts and Sciences freshman class.

The content of the calculus I course had not changed and, from a math standpoint, using the old exam was completely appropriate.

The average exam score for my 2006 calculus I class was significantly lower than for my 1989 class. Comparing the effects of scaling in the two years reveals the extent of the decline. In my 1989 class, 27 percent of students received As on the test and 23 percent Bs. When I graded my 2006 class on my 2006 scale, 32 percent received As and 37 percent Bs. But if I instead graded my 2006 class on the 1989 scale, only 6 percent would have received As and 21 percent Bs. If I graded the 1989 class on the 2006 scale, 52 percent would have received As and 26 percent Bs.

Why did my 2006 class perform so poorly? With the proliferation of AP calculus in high school, one might think that the good students of 2006 place out of calculus I more frequently than did their 1989 counterparts. However, in 1989, 30 percent of the Arts and Sciences freshmen either took the harder engineering calculus course or a higher level mathematics course (calculus II or III, linear algebra, or differential equations). The percentage in 2006 is only 24 percent.

I am inclined to conclude that the 2006 JHU students are not as well prepared as the corresponding group was in 1989, despite there being significantly more competition to get into JHU today than ever before.

This phenomenon is probably shared with many other universities. The year 1989 is, in mathematics education, indelibly tied to the publication by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics of the report "Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics," which downplayed pencil-and-paper computations and strongly suggested that calculators play an important role in K–12 mathematics education. My 2006 students would have been about two years old at the time of this very influential publication, and it could easily have affected the mathematics education many of them received. A 2002 JHU study found that students for whom "in K–12, calculator usage was emphasized and encouraged" had lower mathematics grades in the large service courses.

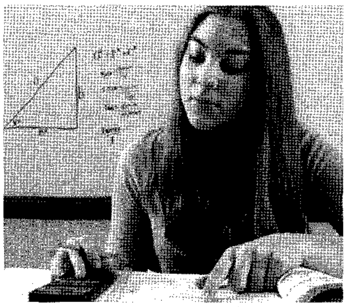


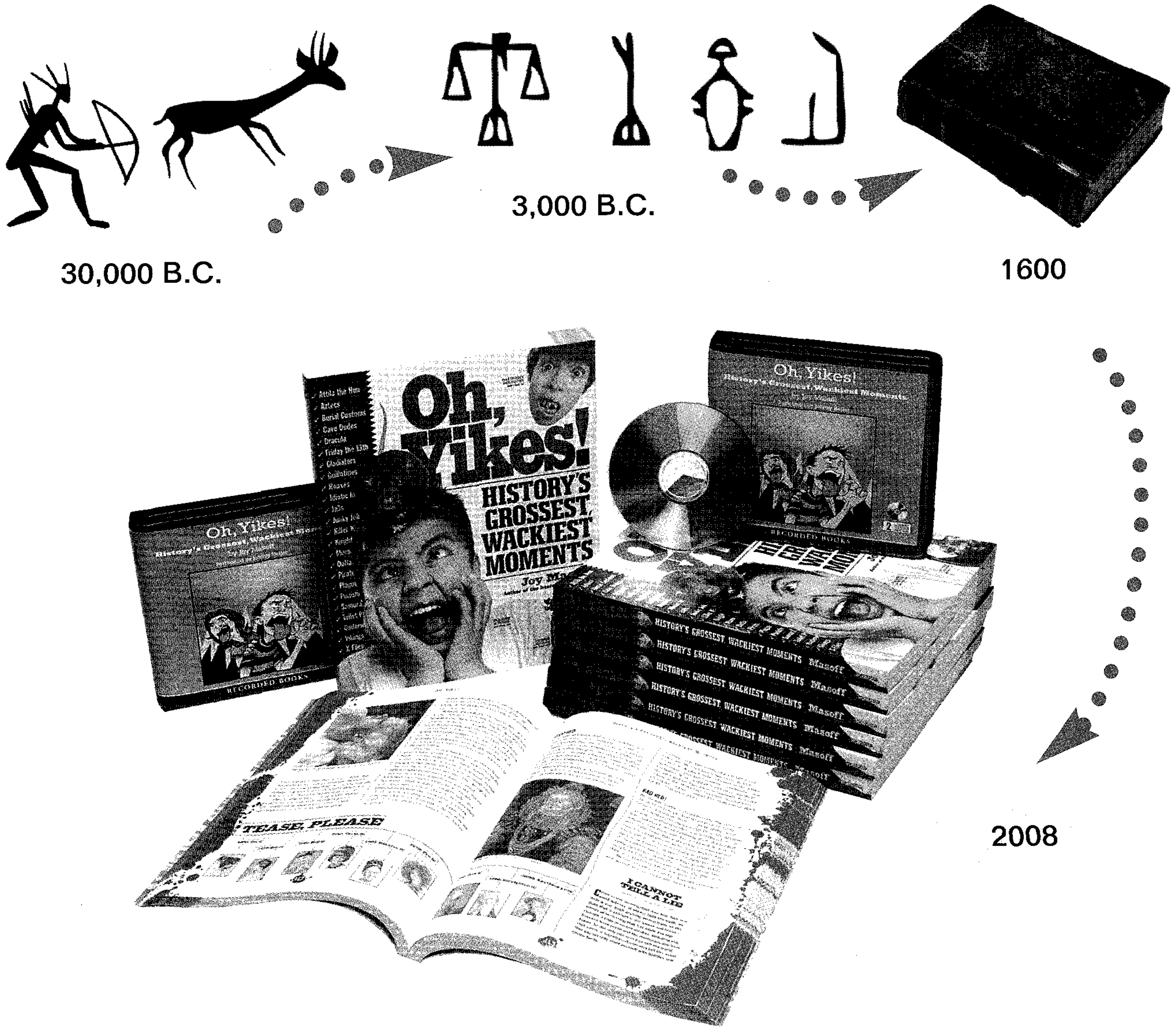
PHOTO / GETTY IMAGES

Students for whom "in K-12, calculator usage was emphasized and encouraged" had lower mathematics grades.

As it stands, universities have no way of rejecting applicants who do not know arithmetic adequately for college-level mathematics. Since 1994, the College Board has allowed the use of calculators on the mathematics SAT. The College Board's calculator policy states, "Every question on the SAT Reasoning Test [SATM] can be solved without a calculator; but you will gain an advantage by using a calculator with which you are familiar." I believe it is precisely this gained "advantage" that causes the SATM to fail universities in the admissions process.

My findings spread like wildfire through the mathematics community. Finally, we have data that confirm what we all thought. The surprise was the general indifference that administrators at JHU had toward the study. This kind of drop in SAT scores would be a crisis, but the news that high-performing students were less prepared for college math than students 17 years earlier didn't seem to bother anyone, at least not enough to contemplate taking action. I urge universities to join together to negotiate with the College Board for a more appropriate test or to look to an alternative test that adequately gauges mathematics preparation.

W. Stephen Wilson is professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins University. The unabridged version of the study is available at www.educationnext.org.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